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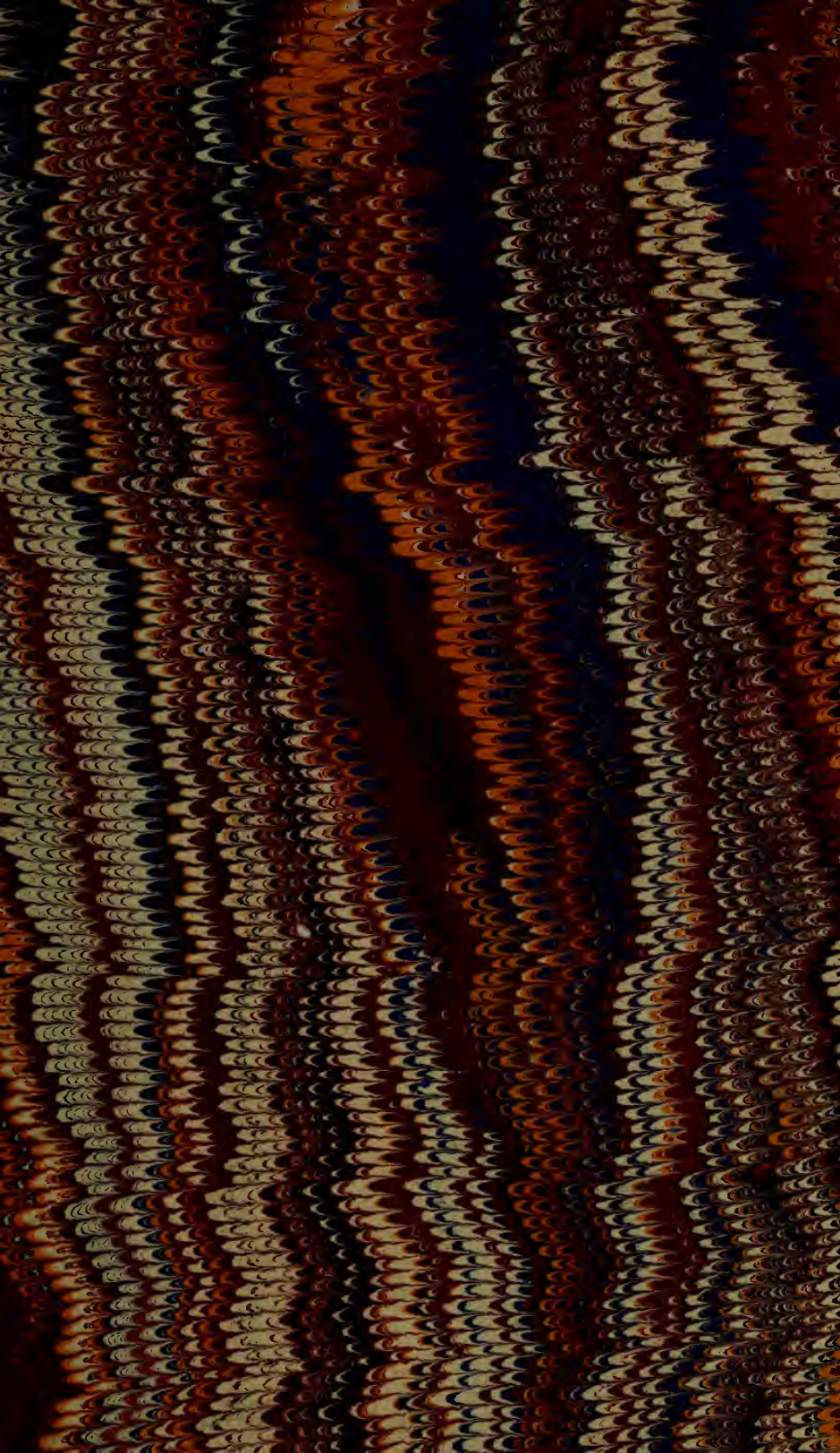

Dombey & Son.

[illegible] dropping on the floor before her, dropping her knees, laying her head against [illegible] and [illegible] herself to and fro with every [illegible] demonstration of [illegible] her victory was capable.

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WORKS

OF

CHARLES DICKENS.

HOUSEHOLD EDITION.

ILLUSTRATED FROM DRAWINGS BY F. O. C. DARLEY AND JOHN GILBERT.

DOMBEY AND SON.

VOL. III.

NEW YORK:
SHELDON AND COMPANY.
335 BROADWAY, COR. WORTH ST.
1862.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1862, by
Henry O. Houghton,
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DOMBEY AND SON.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE WEDDING.

Dawn, with its passionless blank face, steals shivering to the church beneath which lies the dust of little Paul and his mother, and looks in at the windows. It is cold and dark. Night crouches yet, upon the pavement, and broods, sombre and heavy, in nooks and corners of the building. The steeple-clock, perched up above the houses, emerging from beneath another of the countless ripples in the tide of time that regularly roll and break on the eternal shore, is grayly visible, like a stone beacon, recording how the sea flows on; but within doors, dawn, at first, can only peep at night, and see that it is there.

Hovering feebly round the church, and looking in, dawn moans and weeps for its short reign, and its tears trickle on the window-glass, and the trees against the church-wall bow their heads, and wring their many hands in sympathy. Night, growing pale before it, gradually fades out of the church, but lingers in the vaults below, and sits upon the coffins. And now comes bright day, burnishing the steeple-clock, and reddening the spire, and drying up the tears of dawn, and stifling

its complaining; and the scared dawn, following the night, and chasing it from its last refuge, shrinks into the vaults itself and hides, with a frightened face, among the dead, until night returns, refreshed, to drive it out.

And now, the mice, who have been busier with the prayer-books than their proper owners, and with the hassocks, more worn by their little teeth than by human knees, hide their bright eyes in their holes, and gather close together in affright at the resounding clashing of the church-door. For the beadle, that man of power, comes early this morning with the sexton; and Mrs. Miff, the wheezy little pew-opener — a mighty dry old lady, sparely dressed, with not an inch of fulness anywhere about her — is also here, and has been waiting at the church-gate half an hour, as her place is, for the beadle.

A vinegary face has Mrs. Miff, and a mortified bonnet, and eke a thirsty soul for sixpences and shillings. Beckoning to stray people to come into pews, has given Mrs. Miff an air of mystery; and there is reservation in the eye of Mrs. Miff, as always knowing of a softer seat, but having her suspicions of the fee. There is no such fact as Mr. Miff, nor has there been these twenty years, and Mrs. Miff would rather not allude to him. He held some bad opinions, it would seem, about free-seats; and though Mrs. Miff hopes he may be gone upwards, she couldn't positively undertake to say so.

Busy is Mrs. Miff this morning at the church-door, beating and dusting the altar-cloth, the carpet, and the cushions; and much has Mrs. Miff to say, about the wedding they are going to have. Mrs. Miff is told, that the new furniture and alterations in the house cost full five thousand pound if they cost a penny; and Mrs. Miff has heard, upon the best authority, that the lady hasn't

got a sixpence wherewithal to bless herself. Mrs. Miff remembers, likewise, as if it had happened yesterday, the first wife's funeral, and then the christening, and then the other funeral; and Mrs. Miff says, by-the-by she'll soap-and-water that 'ere tablet presently, against the company arrive. Mr. Sownds, the beadle, who is sitting in the sun upon the church-steps all this time (and seldom does anything else, except, in cold weather, sitting by the fire), approves of Mrs. Miff's discourse, and asks if Mrs. Miff has heard it said, that the lady is uncommon handsome? The information Mrs. Miff has received being of this nature, Mr. Sownds the beadle, who, though orthodox and corpulent, is still an admirer of female beauty, observes, with unction, yes, he hears she is a spanker — an expression that seems somewhat forcible to Mrs. Miff, or would from any lips but those of Mr. Sownds the beadle.

In Mr. Dombey's house, at this same time, there is great stir and bustle, more especially among the women: not one of whom has had a wink of sleep since four o'clock, and all of whom were full dressed before six. Mr. Towlinson is an object of greater consideration than usual to the house-maid, and the cook says at breakfast-time that one wedding makes many, which the house-maid can't believe, and don't think true at all. Mr. Towlinson reserves his sentiments on this question; being rendered something gloomy by the engagement of a foreigner with whiskers (Mr. Towlinson is whisker-less himself), who has been hired to accompany the happy pair to Paris, and who is busy packing the new chariot. In respect of this personage, Mr. Towlinson admits, presently, that he never knew of any good that ever come of foreigners; and being charged by the

ladies with prejudice, says, look at Bonaparte, who was at the head of 'em, and see what *he* was always up to! Which the house-maid says is very true.

The pastry-cook is hard at work in the funereal room in Brook-street, and the very tall young men are busy looking on. One of the very tall young men already smells of sherry, and his eyes have a tendency to become fixed in his head, and to stare at objects without seeing them. The very tall young man is conscious of this failing in himself; and informs his comrade that it's his "exciseman." The very tall young man would say excitement, but his speech is hazy.

The men who play the bells have got scent of the marriage; and the marrow-bones and cleavers too; and a brass band too. The first are practising in a back settlement near Battlebridge; the second put themselves in communication, through their chief, with Mr. Towlinson, to whom they offer terms to be bought off; and the third, in the person of an artful trombone, lurks and dodges round the corner, waiting for some traitor tradesman to reveal the place and hour of breakfast, for a bribe. Expectation and excitement extend further yet, and take a wider range. From Balls Pond Mr. Perch brings Mrs. Perch to spend the day with Mr. Dombey's servants, and accompany them, surreptitiously, to see the wedding. In Mr. Toots's lodgings, Mr. Toots attires himself as if he were at least the bridegroom: determined to behold the spectacle in splendor from a secret corner of the gallery, and thither to convey the Chicken: for it is Mr. Toots's desperate intent to point out Florence to the Chicken, then and there, and openly to say, "Now, Chicken, I will not deceive you any longer; the friend I have sometimes mentioned to you is myself; Miss Dombey

is the object of my passion; what are your opinions, Chicken, in this state of things, and what, on the spot, do you advise?" The so-much-to-be-astonished Chicken, in the mean while, dips his beak into a tankard of strong beer, in Mr. Toots's kitchen, and pecks up two pounds of beefsteaks. In Princess's-place, Miss Tox is up and doing; for she too, though in sore distress, is resolved to put a shilling in the hands of Mrs. Miff, and see the ceremony, which has a cruel fascination for her, from some lonely corner. The quarters of the Wooden Midshipman are all alive; for Captain Cuttle, in his ankle-jacks and with a huge shirt-collar, is seated at his breakfast, listening to Rob the Grinder as he reads the marriage-service to him beforehand, under orders, to the end that the captain may perfectly understand the solemnity he is about to witness: for which purpose, the captain gravely lays injunctions on his chaplain, from time to time, to "put about," or to "overhaul that 'ere article again," or to stick to his own duty, and leave the Amens to him, the captain; one of which he repeats whenever a pause is made by Rob the Grinder, with sonorous satisfaction.

Besides all this, and much more, twenty nursery-maids in Mr. Dombey's street alone, have promised twenty families of little women, whose instinctive interest in nuptials dates from their cradles, that they shall go and see the marriage. Truly, Mr. Sownds the beadle has good reason to feel himself in office, as he suns his portly figure on the church-steps, waiting for the marriage hour. Truly, Mrs. Miff has cause to pounce on an unlucky dwarf child, with a giant baby, who peeps in at the porch, and drive her forth with indignation!

Cousin Feenix has come over from abroad, expressly

to attend the marriage. Cousin Feenix was a man about town, forty years ago; but he is still so juvenile in figure and in manner, and so well got up, that strangers are amazed when they discover latent wrinkles in his lordship's face, and crows' feet in his eyes; and first observe him, not exactly certain when he walks across a room, of going quite straight to where he wants to go. But Cousin Feenix, getting up at half-past seven o'clock or so, is quite another thing from Cousin Feenix got up: and very dim, indeed, he looks, while being shaved at Long's Hotel, in Bond-street.

Mr. Dombey leaves his dressing-room, amidst a general whisking away of the women on the staircase, who disperse in all directions, with a great rustling of skirts, except Mrs. Perch, who, being (but that she always is) in an interesting situation, is not nimble, and is obliged to face him, and is ready to sink with confusion as she courtesies; — may Heaven avert all evil consequences from the house of Perch! Mr. Dombey walks up to the drawing-room to bide his time. Gorgeous are Mr. Dombey's new blue coat, fawn-colored pantaloons, and lilac waistcoat; and a whisper goes about the house, that Mr. Dombey's hair is curled.

A double-knock announces the arrival of the major, who is gorgeous too, and wears a whole geranium in his button-hole, and has his hair curled tight and crisp, as well the native knows.

"Dombey!" says the major, putting out both hands, "how are you?"

"Major," says Mr. Dombey, "how are You?"

"By Jove, sir," says the major, "Joey B. is in such case this morning, sir," — and here he hits himself hard upon the breast — "in such case this morning, sir, that,

damme, Dombey, he has half a mind to make a double marriage of it, sir, and take the mother."

Mr. Dombey smiles; but faintly, even for him; for Mr. Dombey feels that he is going to be related to the mother, and that, under those circumstances, she is not to be joked about.

"Dombey," says the major, seeing this, "I give you joy. I congratulate you, Dombey. By the Lord, sir," says the major, "you are more to be envied, this day, than any man in England!"

Here again, Mr. Dombey's assent is qualified; because he is going to confer a great distinction on a lady; and, no doubt, she is to be envied most.

"As to Edith Granger, sir," pursues the major, "there is not a woman in all Europe but might — and would, sir, you will allow Bagstock to add — and would — give her ears, and her ear-rings, too, to be in Edith Granger's place."

"You are good enough to say so, major," says Mr. Dombey.

"Dombey," returns the major, "you know it. Let us have no false delicacy. You know it. Do you know it, or do you not, Dombey?" says the major, almost in a passion.

"Oh, really, major" —

"Damme, sir," retorts the major, "do you know that fact, or do you not? Dombey! Is old Joe your friend? Are we on that footing of unreserved intimacy, Dombey, that may justify a man — a blunt old Joseph B., sir — in speaking out; or am I to take open order, Dombey, and to keep my distance, and to stand on forms?"

"My dear Major Bagstock," says Mr. Dombey, with a gratified air, "you are quite warm."

"By gad, sir," says the major, "I am warm. Joseph B. does not deny it, Dombey. He is warm. This is an occasion, sir, that calls forth all the honest sympathies remaining in an old, infernal, battered, used up, invalided, J. B. carcass. And I tell you what, Dombey — at such a time a man must blurt out what he feels, or put a muzzle on; and Joseph Bagstock tells you to your face, Dombey, as he tells his club behind your back, that he never will be muzzled when Paul Dombey is in question. Now, damme, sir," concludes the major, with great firmness, "what do you make of that?"

"Major," says Mr. Dombey, "I assure you that I am really obliged to you. I had no idea of checking your too partial friendship."

"Not too partial, sir!" exclaims the choleric major. "Dombey, I deny it!"

"Your friendship I will say then," pursues Mr. Dombey, "on any account. Nor can I forget, major, on such an occasion as the present, how much I am indebted to it."

"Dombey," says the major, with appropriate action, "that is the hand of Joseph Bagstock; of plain old Joey B., sir, if you like that better! That is the hand, of which His Royal Highness the late Duke of York did me the honor to observe, sir, to His Royal Highness the late Duke of Kent, that it was the hand of Josh.; a rough and tough, and possibly an up-to-snuff, old vagabond. Dombey, may the present moment be the least unhappy of our lives. God bless you!"

Now, enters Mr. Carker, gorgeous likewise, and smiling like a wedding-guest indeed. He can scarcely let Mr. Dombey's hand go, he is so congratulatory; and he shakes the major's hand so heartily at the same time,

that his voice shakes too, in accord with his arms, as it comes sliding from between his teeth.

"The very day is auspicious," says Mr. Carker. "The brightest and most genial weather! I hope I am not a moment late?"

"Punctual to your time, sir," says the major.

"I am rejoiced, I am sure," says Mr. Carker. "I was afraid I might be a few seconds after the appointed time, for I was delayed by a procession of wagons; and I took the liberty of riding round to Brook-street" — this to Mr. Dombey — "to leave a few poor rarities of flowers for Mrs. Dombey. A man in my position, and so distinguished as to be invited here, is proud to offer some homage in acknowledgment of his vassalage: and as I have no doubt Mrs. Dombey is overwhelmed with what is costly and magnificent;" with a strange glance at his patron; "I hope the very poverty of my offering, may find favor for it."

"Mrs. Dombey, that is to be," returns Mr. Dombey, condescendingly, "will be very sensible of your attention, Carker, I am sure."

"And if she is to be Mrs. Dombey this morning, sir," says the major, putting down his coffee-cup, and looking at his watch, "it's high time we were off!"

Forth, in a barouche, ride Mr. Dombey, Major Bagstock, and Mr. Carker, to the church. Mr. Sownds the beadle has long risen from the steps, and is in waiting with his cocked hat in his hand. Mrs. Miff courtesies and proposes chairs in the vestry. Mr. Dombey prefers remaining in the church. As he looks up at the organ, Miss Tox in the gallery shrinks behind the fat leg of a cherub on a monument, with cheeks like a young Wind. Captain Cuttle, on the contrary, stands up and

waves his hook, in token of welcome and encouragement. Mr. Toots informs the Chicken, behind his hand, that the middle gentleman, he in the fawn-colored pantaloons, is the father of his love. The Chicken hoarsely whispers Mr. Toots that he's as stiff a cove as ever he see, but that it is within the resources of Science to double him up, with one blow in the waistcoat.

Mr. Sownds and Mrs. Miff are eying Mr. Dombey from a little distance, when the noise of approaching wheels is heard, and Mr. Sownds goes out, Mrs. Miff, meeting Mr. Dombey's eye as it is withdrawn from the presumptuous maniac up-stairs, who salutes him with so much urbanity, drops a courtesy, and informs him that she believes his "good lady" is come. Then, there is a crowding and a whispering at the door, and the good lady enters, with a haughty step.

There is no sign upon her face, of last night's suffering; there is no trace in her manner, of the woman on the bended knees, reposing her wild head, in beautiful abandonment, upon the pillow of the sleeping girl. That girl, all gentle and lovely, is at her side — a striking contrast to her own disdainful and defiant figure, standing there, composed, erect, inscrutable of will, resplendent and majestic in the zenith of its charms, yet beating down, and treading on, the admiration that it challenges.

There is a pause while Mr. Sownds the beadle glides into the vestry for the clergyman and clerk. At this juncture, Mrs. Skewton speaks to Mr. Dombey; more distinctly and emphatically than her custom is, and moving, at the same time, close to Edith.

"My dear Dombey," says the good mama, "I fear I must relinquish darling Florence after all, and suffer her to go home, as she herself proposed. After my loss of

to-day, my dear Dombey, I feel I shall not have spirits, even for her society."

"Had she not better stay with you?" returns the bridegroom.

"I think not, my dear Dombey. No, I think not. I shall be better alone. Besides, my dearest Edith will be her natural and constant guardian when you return, and I had better not encroach upon her trust, perhaps. She might be jealous. Eh, dear Edith?"

The affectionate mama presses her daughter's arm, as she says this: perhaps entreating her attention earnestly.

"To be serious, my dear Dombey," she resumes, "I will relinquish our dear child, and not inflict my gloom upon her. We have settled that, just now. She fully understands, dear Dombey. Edith, my dear, — she fully understands."

Again, the good mother presses her daughter's arm. Mr. Dombey offers no additional remonstrance; for the clergyman and clerk appear; and Mrs. Miff, and Mr. Sownds the beadle, group the party in their proper places at the altar rails.

"Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?"

Cousin Feenix does that. He has come from Baden-Baden on purpose. "Confound it," Cousin Feenix says — good-natured creature, Cousin Feenix — "when we *do* get a rich city fellow into the family, let us show him some attention; let us do something for him."

"*I* give this woman to be married to this man," saith Cousin Feenix therefore. Cousin Feenix, meaning to go in a straight line, but turning off sideways by reason of his wilful legs, gives the wrong woman to be married

to this man, at first — to wit, a bridesmaid of some condition, distantly connected with the family, and ten years Mrs. Skewton's junior — but Mrs. Miff, interposing her mortified bonnet, dexterously turns him back, and runs him, as on castors, full at the "good lady;" whom Cousin Feenix giveth to be married to this man accordingly.

And will they in the sight of heaven —?

Ay, that they will: Mr. Dombey says he will. And what says Edith? *She* will.

So, from that day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do them part, they plight their troth to one another, and are married.

In a firm, free hand, the bride subscribes her name in the register, when they adjourn to the vestry. "There a'n't a many ladies comes here," Mrs. Miff says with a courtesy — to look at Mrs. Miff, at such a season, is to make her mortified bonnet go down with a dip — "writes their names like this good lady!" Mr. Sownds the beadle thinks it is a truly spanking signature, and worthy of the writer — this, however, between himself and conscience.

Florence signs too, but unapplauded, for her hand shakes. All the party sign; Cousin Feenix last; who puts his noble name into a wrong place, and enrolls himself as having been born, that morning.

The major now salutes the bride right gallantly, and carries out that branch of military tactics in reference to all the ladies: notwithstanding Mrs. Skewton's being extremely hard to kiss, and squeaking shrilly in the sacred edifice. The example is followed by Cousin Feenix, and even by Mr. Dombey. Lastly, Mr. Car-

ker, with his white teeth glistening, approaches Edith, more as if he meant to bite her, than to taste the sweets that linger on her lips.

There is a glow upon her proud cheek, and a flashing in her eyes, that may be meant to stay him; but it does not, for he salutes her as the rest have done, and wishes her all happiness.

"If wishes," says he in a low voice, "are not superfluous, applied to such a union."

"I thank you, sir," she answers, with a curled lip, and a heaving bosom.

But, does Edith feel still, as on the night when she knew that Mr. Dombey would return to offer his alliance, that Carker knows her thoroughly, and reads her right, and that she is more degraded by his knowledge of her, than by aught else? Is it for this reason that her haughtiness shrinks beneath his smile, like snow within the hand that grasps it firmly, and that her imperious glance droops in meeting his, and seeks the ground?

"I am proud to see," says Mr. Carker, with a servile stooping of his neck, which the revelations making by his eyes and teeth proclaim to be a lie, "I am proud to see that my humble offering is graced by Mrs. Dombey's hand, and permitted to hold so favored a place in so joyful an occasion."

Though she bends her head, in answer, there is something in the momentary action of her hand, as if she would crush the flowers it holds, and fling them, with contempt, upon the ground. But, she puts the hand through the arm of her new husband, who has been standing near, conversing with the major, and is proud again, and motionless, and silent.

The carriages are once more at the church-door. Mr. Dombey, with his bride upon his arm, conducts her through the twenty families of little women who are on the steps, and every one of whom remembers the fashion and the color of her every article of dress from that moment, and reproduces it on her doll, who is forever being married. Cleopatra and Cousin Feenix enter the same carriage. The major hands into a second carriage, Florence, and the bridesmaid who so narrowly escaped being given away by mistake, and then enters it himself, and is followed by Mr. Carker. Horses prance and caper; coachmen and footmen shine in fluttering favors, flowers, and new-made liveries. Away they dash and rattle through the streets; and as they pass along, a thousand heads are turned to look at them, and a thousand sober moralists revenge themselves for not being married too, that morning, by reflecting that these people little think such happiness can't last.

Miss Tox emerges from behind the cherub's leg, when all is quiet, and comes slowly down, from the gallery. Miss Tox's eyes are red, and her pocket-handkerchief is damp. She is wounded, but not exasperated, and she hopes they may be happy. She quite admits to herself the beauty of the bride, and her own comparatively feeble and faded attractions; but the stately image of Mr. Dombey in his lilac waistcoat, and his fawn-colored pantaloons, is present to her mind, and Miss Tox weeps afresh, behind her veil, on her way home to Princess's-place. Captain Cuttle, having joined in all the amens and responses, with a devout growl, feels much improved by his religious exercises; and in a peaceful frame of mind, pervades the body of the church, glazed hat in hand, and reads the tablet to the memory of little Paul.

The gallant Mr. Toots, attended by the faithful Chicken, leaves the building in torments of love. The Chicken is as yet unable to elaborate a scheme for winning Florence, but his first idea has gained possession of him, and he thinks the doubling up of Mr. Dombey would be a move in the right direction. Mr. Dombey's servants come out of their hiding-places, and prepare to rush to Brook-street, when they are delayed by symptoms of indisposition on the part of Mrs. Perch, who entreats a glass of water, and becomes alarming; Mrs. Perch gets better soon, however, and is borne away; and Mrs. Miff, and Mr. Sownds the beadle, sit upon the steps to count what they have gained by the affair, and talk it over, while the sexton tolls a funeral.

Now, the carriages arrive at the bride's residence, and the players on the bells begin to jingle, and the band strikes up, and Mr. Punch, that model of connubial bliss, salutes his wife. Now, the people run and push, and press round in a gaping throng, while Mr. Dombey, leading Mrs. Dombey by the hand, advances solemnly into the Feenix halls. Now, the rest of the wedding-party alight, and enter after them. And why does Mr. Carker, passing through the people to the hall-door, think of the old woman who called to him in the grove that morning? Or why does Florence, as she passes, think, with a tremble, of her childhood, when she was lost, and of the visage of good Mrs. Brown?

Now, there are more congratulations on this happiest of days, and more company, though not much; and now they leave the drawing-room, and range themselves at table in the dark-brown dining-room, which no confectioner can brighten up, let him garnish the exhausted negroes with as many flowers and love-knots as he will.

The pastry-cook has done his duty like a man, though, and a rich breakfast is set forth. Mr. and Mrs. Chick have joined the party, among others. Mrs. Chick admires that Edith should be, by nature, such a perfect Dombey; and is affable and confidential to Mrs. Skewton, whose mind is relieved of a great load, and who takes her share of the champagne. The very tall young man who suffered from excitement early, is better; but a vague sentiment of repentance has seized upon him, and he hates the other very tall young man, and wrests dishes from him by violence, and takes a grim delight in disobliging the company. The company are cool and calm, and do not outrage the black hatchments of pictures looking down upon them, by any excess of mirth. Cousin Feenix and the major are the gayest there; but Mr. Carker has a smile for the whole table. He has an especial smile for the bride, who very, very, seldom meets it.

Cousin Feenix rises, when the company have breakfasted, and the servants have left the room; and wonderfully young he looks, with his white wristbands almost covering his hands (otherwise rather bony), and the bloom of the champagne in his cheeks.

"Upon my honor," says Cousin Feenix, "although it's an unusual sort of thing in a private gentleman's house, I must beg leave to call upon you to drink what is usually called a — in fact a toast."

The major very hoarsely indicates his approval. Mr. Carker bending his head forward over the table in the direction of Cousin Feenix, smiles and nods a great many times.

"A — in fact it's not a" — Cousin Feenix beginning again, thus, comes to a dead stop.

"Hear, hear!" says the major, in a tone of conviction.

Mr. Carker softly claps his hands, and bending forward over the table again, smiles and nods a great many more times than before, as if he were particularly struck by this last observation, and desired personally to express his sense of the good it has done him.

"It is," says Cousin Feenix, "an occasion in fact, when the general usages of life may be a little departed from, without impropriety; and although I never was an orator in my life, and when I was in the House of Commons, and had the honor of seconding the address, was — in fact, was laid up for a fortnight with the consciousness of failure" —

The major and Mr. Carker are so much delighted by this fragment of personal history, that Cousin Feenix laughs, and addressing them individually, goes on to say:

"And in point of fact, when I was devilish ill — still, you know, I feel that a duty devolves upon me. And when a duty devolves upon an Englishman, he is bound to get out of it, in my opinion, in the best way he can. Well! our family has had the gratification, to-day, of connecting itself, in the person of my lovely and accomplished relative, whom I now see — in point of fact, present" —

Here there is general applause.

"Present," repeats Cousin Feenix, feeling that it is a neat point which will bear repetition — "with one who — that is to say, with a man, at whom the finger of scorn can never — in fact, with my honorable friend Dombey, if he will allow me to call him so."

Cousin Feenix bows to Mr. Dombey; Mr. Dombey

solemnly returns the bow; everybody is more or less gratified and affected by this extraordinary, and perhaps unprecedented, appeal to the feelings.

"I have not," says Cousin Feenix, "enjoyed those opportunities which I could have desired, of cultivating the acquaintance of my friend Dombey, and studying those qualities which do equal honor to his head, and, in point of fact, to his heart; for it has been my misfortune to be, as we used to say in my time in the House of Commons, when it was not the custom to allude to the Lords, and when the order of parliamentary proceedings was perhaps better observed that it is now —to be in—in point of fact," says Cousin Feenix, cherishing his joke, with great slyness, and finally bringing it out with a jerk, "'in another place!'"

The major falls into convulsions, and is recovered with difficulty.

"But I know sufficient of my friend Dombey," resumes Cousin Feenix in a graver tone, as if he had suddenly become a sadder and a wiser man, "to know that he is, in point of fact, what may be emphatically called a — a merchant — a British merchant — and a — and a man. And although I have been resident abroad for some years (it would give me great pleasure to receive my friend Dombey, and everybody here, at Baden-Baden, and to have an opportunity of making 'em known to the Grand Duke), still I know enough, I flatter myself, of my lovely and accomplished relative, to know that she possesses every requisite to make a man happy, and that her marriage with my friend Dombey is one of inclination and affection on both sides."

Many smiles and nods from Mr. Carker.

"Therefore," says Cousin Feenix, "I congratulate the

family of which I am a member, on the acquisition of my friend Dombey. I congratulate my friend Dombey on his union with my lovely and accomplished relative who possesses every requisite to make a man happy; and I take the liberty of calling on you all, in point of fact, to congratulate both my friend Dombey and my lovely and accomplished relative, on the present occasion."

The speech of Cousin Feenix is received with great applause, and Mr. Dombey returns thanks on behalf of himself and Mrs. Dombey, J. B. shortly afterwards proposes Mrs. Skewton. The breakfast languishes when that is done, the violated hatchments are avenged, and Edith rises to assume her travelling dress.

All the servants in the mean time, have been breakfasting below. Champagne has grown too common among them to be mentioned, and roast fowls, raised pies, and lobster salad, have become mere drugs. The very tall young man has recovered his spirits, and again alludes to the exciseman. His comrade's eye begins to emulate his own, and he, too, stares at objects without taking cognizance thereof. There is a general redness in the faces of the ladies; in the face of Mrs. Perch particularly, who is joyous and beaming, and lifted so far above the cares of life, that if she were asked just now to direct a wayfarer to Ball's Pond, where her own cares lodge, she would have some difficulty in recalling the way. Mr. Towlinson has proposed the happy pair; to which the silver-headed butler has responded neatly, and with emotion; for he half begins to think he *is* an old retainer of the family, and that he is bound to be affected by these changes. The whole party, and especially the ladies, are very frolicsome. Mr. Dombey's

cook, who generally takes the lead in society, has said, it is impossible to settle down after this, and why not go, in a party, to the play? Everybody (Mrs. Perch included) has agreed to this; even the native who is tigerish in his drink, and who alarms the ladies (Mrs. Perch particularly) by the rolling of his eyes. One of the very tall young men has even proposed a ball after the play, and it presents itself to no one (Mrs. Perch included) in the light of an impossibility. Words have arisen between the house-maid and Mr. Towlinson; she, on the authority of an old saw, asserting marriages to be made in heaven: he, affecting to trace the manufacture elsewhere; he, supposing that she says so, because she thinks of being married her own self: she, saying, Lord forbid, at any rate, that she should ever marry *him*. To calm these flying taunts, the silver-headed butler rises to propose the health of Mr. Towlinson, whom to know is to esteem, and to esteem is to wish well settled in life with the object of his choice, wherever (here the silver-headed butler eyes the house-maid) she may be. Mr. Towlinson returns thanks in a speech replete with feeling, of which the peroration turns on foreigners, regarding whom he says they may find favor, sometimes with weak and inconstant intellects that can be led away by hair, but all he hopes, is, he may never hear of no foreigner never boning nothing out of no travelling chariot. The eye of Mr. Towlinson is so severe and so expressive here, that the house-maid is turning hysterical, when she and all the rest, roused by the intelligence that the Bride is going away, hurry up-stairs to witness her departure.

The chariot is at the door; the Bride is descending to the hall, where Mr. Dombey waits for her. Florence is

ready on the staircase to depart too; and Miss Nipper, who has held a middle state between the parlor and the kitchen, is prepared to accompany her. As Edith appears, Florence hastens towards her, to bid her farewell.

Is Edith cold, that she should tremble! Is there anything unnatural or unwholesome in the touch of Florence, that the beautiful form recedes and contracts, as if it could not bear it! Is there so much hurry in this going away, that Edith, with a wave of her hand, sweeps on, and is gone!

Mrs. Skewton, overpowered by her feelings as a mother, sinks on her sofa in the Cleopatra attitude, when the clatter of the chariot wheels is lost, and sheds several tears. The major, coming with the rest of the company from table, endeavors to comfort her; but she will not be comforted on any terms, and so the major takes his leave. Cousin Feenix takes his leave, and Mr. Carker takes his leave. The guests all go away. Cleopatra, left alone, feels a little giddy from her strong emotion, and falls asleep.

Giddiness prevails below stairs too. The very tall young man whose excitement came on so soon, appears to have his head glued to the table in the pantry, and cannot be detached from it. A violent revulsion has taken place in the spirits of Mrs. Perch, who is low on account of Mr. Perch; and tells cook that she fears he is not so much attached to his home, as he used to be, when they were only nine in family. Mr. Towlinson has a singing in his ears and a large wheel going round and round inside his head. The house-maid wishes it wasn't wicked to wish that one was dead.

There is a general delusion likewise, in these lower regions, on the subject of time; everybody conceiving

that it ought to be, at the earliest, ten o'clock at night, whereas it is not yet three in the afternoon. A shadowy idea of wickedness committed, haunts every individual in the party; and each one secretly thinks the other a companion in guilt, whom it would be agreeable to avoid. No man or woman has the hardihood to hint at the projected visit to the play. Any one reviving the notion of the ball, would be scouted as a malignant idiot.

Mrs. Skewton sleeps up-stairs, two hours afterwards, and naps are not yet over in the kitchen. The hatchments in the dining-room look down on crumbs, dirty plates, spillings of wine, half-thawed ice, stale discolored heel-taps, scraps of lobster, drumsticks of fowls, and pensive jellies, gradually resolving themselves into a lukewarm gummy soup. The marriage is, by this time, almost as denuded of its show and garnish as the breakfast. Mr. Dombey's servants moralize so much about it, and are so repentant over their early tea, at home, that by eight o'clock or so, they settle down into confirmed seriousness; and Mr. Perch, arriving at that time from the city, fresh and jocular, with a white waistcoat and a comic song, ready to spend the evening, and prepared for any amount of dissipation, is amazed to find himself coldly received, and Mrs. Perch but poorly, and to have the pleasing duty of escorting that lady home by the next omnibus.

Night closes in. Florence having rambled through the handsome house, from room to room, seeks her own chamber, where the care of Edith has surrounded her with luxuries and comforts; and divesting herself of her handsome dress, puts on her old simple mourning for dear Paul, and sits down to read, with Diogenes winking and blinking on the ground beside her. But Florence

cannot read to-night. The house seems strange and new, and there are loud echoes in it. There is a shadow on her heart: she knows not why or what: but it is heavy. Florence shuts her book, and gruff Diogenes, who takes that for a signal, puts his paws upon her lap, and rubs his ears against her caressing hands. But Florence cannot see him plainly, in a little time, for there is a mist between her eyes and him, and her dead brother and dead mother, shine in it like angels. Walter, too, poor wandering shipwrecked boy, oh, where is he!

The major don't know; that's for certain; and don't care. The major, having choked and slumbered, all the afternoon, has taken a late dinner at his club, and now sits over his pint of wine, driving a modest young man, with a fresh-colored face, at the next table (who would give a handsome sum to be able to rise and go away, but cannot do it) to the verge of madness, by anecdotes of Bagstock, sir, at Dombey's wedding, and old Joe's devilish gentlemanly friend, Lord Feenix. While Cousin Feenix, who ought to be at Long's, and in bed, finds himself, instead, at a gaming-table, where his wilful legs have taken him, perhaps, in his own despite.

Night, like a giant, fills the church, from pavement to roof, and holds dominion through the silent hours. Pale dawn again comes peeping through the windows; and, giving place to day, sees night withdraw into the vaults, and follows it, and drives it out, and hides among the dead. The timid mice again cower close together, when the great door clashes, and Mr. Sownds and Mrs. Miff, treading the circle of their daily lives, unbroken as a marriage ring, come in. Again the cocked-hat and the mortified bonnet stand in the background at the marriage hour;

and again this man taketh this woman, and this woman taketh this man, on the solemn terms:

"To have and to hold, from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until death do them part."

The very words that Mr. Carker rides into town repeating, with his mouth stretched to the utmost, as he picks his dainty way.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE WOODEN MIDSHIPMAN GOES TO PIECES.

Honest Captain Cuttle, as the weeks flew over him in his fortified retreat, by no means abated any of his prudent provisions against surprise, because of the non-appearance of the enemy. The captain argued that his present security was too profound and wonderful to endure much longer; he knew that when the wind stood in a fair quarter, the weathercock was seldom nailed there; and he was too well acquainted with the determined and dauntless character of Mrs. MacStinger, to doubt that that heroic woman had devoted herself to the task of his discovery and capture. Trembling beneath the weight of these reasons, Captain Cuttle lived a very close and retired life; seldom stirring abroad until after dark; venturing even then only into the obscurest streets; never going forth at all on Sundays; and both within and without the walls of his retreat, avoiding bonnets, as if they were worn by raging lions.

The captain never dreamed that in the event of his being pounced upon by Mrs. MacStinger, in his walks, it would be possible to offer resistance. He felt that it could not be done. He saw himself, in his mind's eye, put meekly in a hackney-coach, and carried off to his old lodgings. He foresaw that, once immured there, he was a lost man: his hat gone; Mrs. MacStinger watchful of him day and

night; reproaches heaped upon his head, before the infant family; himself the guilty object of suspicion and distrust: an ogre in the children's eyes, and in their mother's a detected traitor.

A violent perspiration, and a lowness of spirits always came over the captain as this gloomy picture presented itself to his imagination. It generally did so previous to his stealing out of doors at night for air and exercise. Sensible of the risk he ran, the captain took leave of Rob, at those times with the solemnity which became a man who might never return: exhorting him in the event of his (the captain's) being lost sight of, for a time, to tread in the paths of virtue, and keep the brazen instruments well polished.

But not to throw away a chance: and to secure to himself a means, in case of the worst, of holding communication with the external world; Captain Cuttle soon conceived the happy idea of teaching Rob the Grinder some secret signal, by which that adherent might make his presence and fidelity known to his commander, in the hour of adversity. After much cogitation, the captain decided in favor of instructing him to whistle the marine melody, "Oh cheerily, cheerily!" and Rob the Grinder attaining a point as near perfection in that accomplishment as a landsman could hope to reach, the captain impressed these mysterious instructions on his mind:

"Now, my lad, stand by! If ever I'm took"—

"Took, captain!" interposed Rob, with his round eyes wide open.

"Ah!" said Captain Cuttle darkly, "if ever I goes away, meaning to come back to supper, and don't come within hail again twenty-four hours arter my loss, go you

to Brig-place and whistle that 'ere tune near my old moorings — not as if you was a-meaning of it, you understand, but as if you'd drifted there, promiscuous. If I answer in that tune, you sheer off, my lad, and come back four-and-twenty hours arterwards; if I answer in another tune, do you stand off and on, and wait till I throw out further signals. Do you understand them orders, now?"

"What am I to stand off and on of, captain?" inquired Rob. "The horse-road?"

"Here's a smart lad for you!" cried the captain, eying him sternly, "as don't know his own native alphabet! Go away a bit and come back again alternate — d'ye understand that?"

"Yes, captain," said Rob.

"Very good, my lad, then," said the captain, relenting. "Do it!"

That he might do it the better, Captain Cuttle sometimes condescended, of an evening, after the shop was shut, to rehearse the scene: retiring into the parlor for the purpose, as into the lodgings of a supposititious Mac-Stinger, and carefully observing the behavior of his ally, from the hole of espial he had cut in the wall. Rob the Grinder discharged himself of his duty with so much exactness and judgment, when thus put to the proof, that the captain presented him, at divers times, with seven sixpences, in token of satisfaction; and gradually felt stealing over his spirit the resignation of a man who had made provision for the worst, and taken every reasonable precaution against an unrelenting fate.

Nevertheless, the captain did not tempt ill-fortune, by being a whit more venturesome than before. Though he considered it a point of good-breeding in himself, as a

general friend of the family, to attend Mr. Dombey's wedding (of which he had heard from Mr. Perch), and to show that gentleman a pleasant and approving countenance from the gallery, he had repaired to the church in a hackney cabriolet with both windows up; and might have scrupled even to make that venture, in his dread of Mrs. MacStinger, but that the lady's attendance on the ministry of the Reverend Melchisedech rendered it peculiarly unlikely that she would be found in communion with the Establishment.

The captain got safe home again, and fell into the ordinary routine of his new life, without encountering any more direct alarm from the enemy, than was suggested to him by the daily bonnets in the street. But other subjects began to lie heavier on the captain's mind. Walter's ship was still unheard of. No news came of old Sol Gills. Florence did not even know of the old man's disappearance, and Captain Cuttle had not the heart to tell her. Indeed the captain, as his own hopes of the generous, handsome, gallant-hearted youth, whom he had loved, according to his rough manner, from a child, began to fade, and faded more and more from day to day, shrunk with instinctive pain from the thought of exchanging a word with Florence. If he had had good news to carry to her, the honest captain would have braved the newly decorated house and splendid furniture — though these connected with the lady he had seen at church, were awful to him — and made his way into her presence. With a dark horizon gathering around their common hopes, however, that darkened every hour, the captain almost felt as if he were a new misfortune and affliction to her; and was scarcely less afraid of a visit from Florence, than from Mrs. MacStinger herself.

It was a chill dark autumn evening, and Captain Cuttle had ordered a fire to be kindled in the little back-parlor, now more than ever like the cabin of a ship. The rain fell fast, and the wind blew hard; and straying out on the house-top by that stormy bedroom of his old friend, to take an observation of the weather, the captain's heart died within him, when he saw how wild and desolate it was. Not that he associated the weather of that time with poor Walter's destiny, or doubted that if Providence had doomed him to be lost and shipwrecked, it was over, long ago; but that beneath an outward influence, quite distinct from the subject-matter of his thoughts, the captain's spirits sank, and his hopes turned pale, as those of wiser men had often done before him, and will often do again.

Captain Cuttle, addressing his face to the sharp wind and slanting rain, looked up at the heavy scud that was flying fast over the wilderness of house-tops, and looked for something cheery there in vain. The prospect near at hand was no better. In sundry tea-chests, and other rough boxes at his feet, the pigeons of Rob the Grinder were cooing like so many dismal breezes getting up. A crazy weathercock of a midshipman, with a telescope at his eye, once visible from the street, but long bricked out, creaked and complained upon his rusty pivot as the shrill blast spun him round and round, and sported with him cruelly. Upon the captain's coarse blue vest the cold rain-drops started like steel beads; and he could hardly maintain himself aslant against the stiff nor'wester that came pressing against him, importunate to topple him over the parapet, and throw him on the pavement below. If there were any Hope alive that evening, the captain thought, as he held his hat on, it certainly kept

house, and wasn't out of doors; so the captain, shaking his head in a despondent manner, went in to look for it.

Captain Cuttle descended slowly to the little back parlor, and, seated in his accustomed chair, looked for it in the fire; but it was not there, though the fire was bright. He took out his tobacco-box and pipe, and composing himself to smoke, looked for it in the red glow from the bowl, and in the wreaths of vapor that curled upward from his lips; but there was not so much as an atom of the rust of Hope's anchor in either. He tried a glass of grog; but melancholy truth was at the bottom of that well, and he couldn't finish it. He made a turn or two in the shop, and looked for Hope among the instruments; but they obstinately worked out reckonings for the missing ship, in spite of any opposition he could offer, that ended at the bottom of the lone sea.

The wind still rushing, and the rain still pattering, against the closed shutters, the captain brought to before the wooden Midshipman upon the counter, and thought, as he dried the little officer's uniform with his sleeve, how many years the Midshipman had seen, during which few changes — hardly any — had transpired among his ship's company; how the changes had come all together one day, as it might be; and of what a sweeping kind they were. Here was the little society of the back parlor broken up, and scattered far and wide. Here was no audience for Lovely Peg, even if there had been anybody to sing it, which there was not; for the captain was as morally certain that nobody but he could execute that ballad, as he was that he had not the spirit, under existing circumstances, to attempt it. There was no bright face of "Wal'r" in the house; — here the captain

transferred his sleeve for a moment from the midshipman's uniform to his own cheek; — the familiar wig and buttons of Sol Gills were a vision of the past; Richard Whittington was knocked on the head; and every plan and project, in connection with the Midshipman, lay drifting, without mast or rudder, on the waste of waters.

As the captain, with a dejected face, stood revolving these thoughts, and polishing the Midshipman, partly in the tenderness of old acquaintance, and partly in the absence of his mind, a knocking at the shop-door communicated a frightful start to the frame of Rob the Grinder, seated on the counter, whose large eyes had been intently fixed on the captain's face, and who had been debating within himself, for the five hundredth time, whether the captain could have done a murder, that he had such an evil conscience, and was always running away.

"What's that!" said Captain Cuttle, softly.

"Somebody's knuckles, captain," answered Rob the Grinder.

The captain, with an abashed and guilty air, immediately sneaked on tiptoe to the little parlor and locked himself in. Rob, opening the door, would have parleyed with the visitor on the threshold if the visitor had come in female guise; but the figure being of the male sex, and Rob's orders only applying to women, Rob held the door open and allowed it to enter: which it did very quickly, glad to get out of the driving rain.

"A job for Burgess and Co. at any rate," said the visitor looking over his shoulder compassionately at his own legs, which were very wet and covered with splashes. "Oh, how-de-do, Mr. Gills?"

The salutation, was addressed to the captain, now emerging from the back-parlor with a most transparent and utterly futile affectation of coming out by accident.

"Thankee," the gentleman went on to say in the same breath; "I'm very well indeed, myself, I'm much obliged to you. My name is Toots, — *Mister* Toots."

The captain remembered to have seen this young gentleman at the wedding, and made him a bow. Mr. Toots replied with a chuckle; and being embarrassed, as he generally was, breathed hard, shook hands with the captain for a long time, and then falling on Rob the Grinder, in the absence of any other resource, shook hands with him in a most affectionate and cordial manner.

"I say; I should like to speak a word to you, Mr. Gills, if you please," said Toots at length, with surprising presence of mind. "I say! Miss D. O. M. you know!"

The captain, with responsive gravity and mystery, immediately waved his hook towards the little parlor, whither Mr. Toots followed him.

"Oh! I beg your pardon though," said Mr. Toots, looking up in the captain's face, as he sat down in a chair by the fire, which the captain placed for him; "you don't happen to know the Chicken at all; do you Mr. Gills?"

"The Chicken?" said the captain.

"The Game Chicken," said Mr. Toots.

The captain shaking his head, Mr. Toots explained that the man alluded to was the celebrated public character who had covered himself and his country with glory in his contest with the Nobby Shropshire One;

but this piece of information did not appear to enlighten the captain very much.

"Because he's outside: that's all," said Mr. Toots. "But it's of no consequence; he won't get very wet, perhaps."

"I can pass the word for him in a moment," said the captain.

"Well, if you *would* have the goodness to let him sit in the shop with your young man," chuckled Mr. Toots, "I should be glad; because you know, he's easily offended, and the damp's rather bad for his stamina. *I'll* call him in, Mr. Gills."

With that, Mr. Toots, repairing to the shop-door, sent a peculiar whistle into the night, which produced a stoical gentleman in a shaggy white great-coat and a flat-brimmed hat, with very short hair, a broken nose, and a considerable tract of bare and sterile country behind each ear.

"Sit down, Chicken," said Mr. Toots.

The compliant Chicken spat out some small pieces of straw on which he was regaling himself, and took in a fresh supply from a reserve he carried in his hand.

"There a'n't no drain of nothing short handy, is there?" said the Chicken, generally. "This here sluicing night is hard lines to a man as lives on his condition."

Captain Cuttle proffered a glass of rum, which the Chicken, throwing back his head, emptied into himself, as into a cask, after proposing the brief sentiment, "Towards us!" Mr. Toots and the captain returning then to the parlor, and taking their seats before the fire, Mr. Toots began:

"Mr. Gills" —

"Awast!" said the captain. "My name's Cuttle."

Mr. Toots looked greatly disconcerted, while the captain proceeded gravely:

"Cap'en Cuttle is my name, and England is my nation, this here is my dwelling-place, and blessed be creation — Job," said the captain, as an index to his authority.

"Oh! I couldn't see Mr. Gills, could I?" said Mr. Toots; "because" —

"If you could see Sol Gills, young gen'l'm'n," said the captain, impressively, and laying his heavy hand on Mr. Toots's knee, "old Sol, mind you — with your own eyes — as you sit there — you'd be welcomer to me, than a wind astern, to a ship becalmed. But you can't see Sol Gills. And why can't you see Sol Gills?" said the captain, apprised by the face of Mr. Toots that he was making a profound impression on that gentleman's mind. "Because he's inwisible."

Mr. Toots in his agitation was going to reply that it was of no consequence at all. But he corrected himself, and said, "Lor bless me!"

"That there man," said the captain, "has left me in charge here by a piece of writing, but though he was a'most as good as my sworn brother, I know no more where he's gone, or why he's gone; if so be to seek his nevy, or if so be along of being not quite settled in his mind; than you do. One morning at daybreak, he went over the side," said the captain, "without a splash, without a ripple. I have looked for that man high and low, and never set eyes, nor ears, nor nothing else, upon him, from that hour."

"But, good gracious, Miss Dombey don't know" — Mr. Toots began.

"Why, I ask you, as a feeling heart," said the captain, dropping his voice, "why should she know? why should she be made to know, until such time as there warn't any help for it? She took to old Sol Gills, did that sweet creetur, with a kindness, with a affability, with a — what's the good of saying so? you know her."

"I should hope so," chuckled Mr. Toots, with a conscious blush that suffused his whole countenance.

"And you come here from her?" said the captain.

"I should think so," chuckled Mr. Toots.

"Then all I need observe is," said the captain, "that you know a angel, and are chartered *by* a angel."

Mr. Toots instantly seized the captain's hand, and requested the favor of his friendship.

"Upon my word and honor," said Mr. Toots, earnestly, "I should be very much obliged to you if you'd improve my acquaintance. I should like to know you, captain, very much. I really am in want of a friend, I am. Little Dombey was my friend at old Blimber's, and would have been now, if he'd have lived. The Chicken," said Mr. Toots, in a forlorn whisper, "is very well — admirable in his way — the sharpest man perhaps in the world; there's not a move he isn't up to, everybody says so — but I don't know — he's not everything. So she *is* an angel, captain. If there is an angel anywhere, it's Miss Dombey. That's what I've always said. Really though, you know," said Mr. Toots, "I should be very much obliged to you if you'd cultivate my acquaintance."

Captain Cuttle received this proposal in a polite manner, but still without committing himself to its acceptance; merely observing, "Ay, ay, my lad. We shall

see, we shall see;" and reminding Mr. Toots of his immediate mission, by inquiring to what he was indebted for the honor of that visit.

"Why the fact is," replied Mr. Toots, "that it's the young woman I come from. Not Miss Dombey — Susan you know."

The captain nodded his head once, with a grave expression of face, indicative of his regarding that young woman with serious respect.

"And I'll tell you how it happens," said Mr. Toots. "You know, I go and call sometimes, on Miss Dombey. I don't go there on purpose, you know, but I happen to be in the neighborhood very often; and when I find myself there, why — why I call."

"Nat'rally," observed the captain.

"Yes," said Mr. Toots. "I called this afternoon. Upon my word and honor, I don't think it's possible to form an idea of the angel Miss Dombey was this afternoon."

The captain answered with a jerk of his head, implying that it might not be easy to some people, but was quite so, to him.

"As I was coming out," said Mr. Toots, "the young woman, in the most unexpected manner, took me into the pantry."

The captain seemed, for the moment, to object to this proceeding; and leaning back in his chair, looked at Mr. Toots with a distrustful, if not threatening visage.

"Where she brought out," said Mr. Toots, "this newspaper. She told me that she had kept it from Miss Dombey all day, on account of something that was in it, about somebody that she and Dombey used to know; and then she read the passage to me. Very well. Then

she said — wait a minute; what was it, she said though!"

Mr. Toots, endeavoring to concentrate his mental powers on this question, unintentionally fixed the captain's eye, and was so much discomposed by its stern expression, that his difficulty in resuming the thread of his subject was enhanced to a painful extent.

"Oh!" said Mr. Toots after long consideration. "Oh, ah! Yes! She said that she hoped there was a bare possibility that it mightn't be true; and that as she couldn't very well come out herself, without surprising Miss Dombey, would I go down to Mr. Solomon Gills the Instrument-maker's in this street, who was the party's uncle, and ask whether he believed it was true, or had heard anything else in the city. She said, if he couldn't speak to me, no doubt Captain Cuttle could. By the by!" said Mr. Toots, as the discovery flashed upon him, "you, you know!"

The captain glanced at the newspaper in Mr. Toots's hand, and breathed short and hurriedly.

"Well," pursued Mr. Toots, "the reason why I'm rather late is, because I went up as far as Finchley first, to get some uncommonly fine chickweed that grows there, for Miss Dombey's bird. But I came on here, directly afterwards. You've seen the paper, I suppose?"

The captain, who had become cautious of reading the news, lest he should find himself advertised at full length by Mrs. MacStinger, shook his head.

"Shall I read the passage to you?" inquired Mr. Toots.

The captain making a sign in the affirmative, Mr. Toots read as follows, from the Shipping Intelligence:

"'Southampton. The barque Defiance, Henry James,

Commander, arrived in this port to-day, with a cargo of sugar, coffee, and rum, reports that being becalmed on the sixth day of her passage home from Jamaica, in' — in such and such a latitude, you know," said Mr. Toots, after making a feeble dash at the figures, and tumbling over them.

"Ay!" cried the captain, striking his clinched hand on the table. "Heave ahead, my lad!"

"— latitude," repeated Mr. Toots, with a startled glance at the captain, "and longitude so-and-so, — 'the lookout observed, half an hour before sunset, some fragments of a wreck, drifting at about the distance of a mile. The weather being clear, and the barque making no way, a boat was hoisted out, with orders to inspect the same, when they were found to consist of sundry large spars, and a part of the main rigging of an English brig, of about five hundred tons burden, together with a portion of the stern on which the words and letters "Son and H—" were yet plainly legible. No vestige of any dead body was to be seen upon the floating fragments. Log of the Defiance states, that a breeze springing up in the night, the wreck was seen no more. There can be no doubt that all surmises as to the fate of the missing vessel, the Son and Heir, port of London, bound for Barbadoes, are now set at rest forever; that she broke up in the last hurricane; and that every soul on board perished.'"

Captain Cuttle, like all mankind, little knew how much hope had survived within him under discouragement, until he felt its death-shock. During the reading of the paragraph, and for a minute or two afterwards, he sat with his gaze fixed on the modest Mr. Toots, like a man entranced; then, suddenly rising, and putting on

his glazed hat, which, in his visitor's honor, he had laid upon the table, the captain turned his back, and bent his head down on the little chimney-piece.

"Oh, upon my word and honor," cried Mr. Toots, whose tender heart was moved by the captain's unexpected distress, "this is a most wretched sort of affair this world is! Somebody's always dying, or going and doing something uncomfortable in it. I'm sure I never should have looked forward so much, to coming into my property, if I had known this. I never saw such a world. It's a great deal worse than Blimber's."

Captain Cuttle, without altering his position, signed to Mr. Toots not to mind him; and presently turned round, with his glazed hat thrust back upon his ears, and his hand composing and smoothing his brown face.

"Wal'r, my dear lad," said the captain, "farewell! Wal'r, my child, my boy, and man, I loved you! He warn't my flesh and blood," said the captain, looking at the fire — "I a'n't got none — but something of what a father feels when he loses a son, I feel in losing Wal'r. For why?" said the captain. "Because it a'n't one loss, but a round dozen. Where's that there young schoolboy with the rosy face and curly hair, that used to be as merry in this here parlor, come round every week, as a piece of music? Gone down with Wal'r. Where's that there fresh lad, that nothing couldn't tire nor put out, and that sparkled up and blushed so, when we joked him about Heart's Delight, that he was beautiful to look at? Gone down with Wal'r. Where's that there man's spirit, all afire, that wouldn't see the old man hove down for a minute, and cared nothing for itself? Gone down with Wal'r. It a'n't one Wal'r. There was a dozen Wal'rs that I know'd and loved, all holding round his

neck when he went down, and they're a-holding round mine now!"

Mr. Toots sat silent: folding and refolding the newspaper as small as possible upon his knee.

"And Sol Gills," said the captain, gazing at the fire, "poor nevyless old Sol, where are *you* got to! you was left in charge of me; his last words was, 'Take care of my uncle.' What came over *you*, Sol, when you went and gave the go-by to Ned Cuttle; and what am I to put in my accounts that he's a-looking down upon, respecting you! Sol Gills, Sol Gills!" said the captain, shaking his head slowly, "catch sight of that there newspaper, away from home, with no one as know'd Wal'r by, to say a word; and broadside-to you broach, and down you pitch, head-foremost!"

Drawing a heavy sigh, the captain turned to Mr. Toots, and roused himself to a sustained consciousness of that gentleman's presence.

"My lad," said the captain, "you must tell the young woman honestly that this here fatal news is too correct. They don't romance, you see, on such pints. It's entered on the ship's log, and that's the truest book as a man can write. To-morrow morning," said the captain, "I'll step out and make inquiries; but they'll lead to no good. They can't do it. If you'll give me a look-in in the forenoon, you shall know what I have heerd; but tell the young woman from Cap'en Cuttle, that it's over. Over!" And the captain, hooking off his glazed hat, pulled his handkerchief out of the crown, wiped his grizzled head despairingly, and tossed the handkerchief in again, with the indifference of deep dejection.

"Oh! I assure you," said Mr. Toots, "really I am dreadfully sorry. Upon my word I am, though I wasn't

acquainted with the party. Do you think Miss Dombey will be very much affected, Captain Gills — I mean Mr. Cuttle?"

"Why, Lord love you," returned the captain, with something of compassion for Mr. Toots's innocence. "When she warn't no higher than that, they were as fond of one another as two young doves."

"Were they though!" said Mr. Toots, with a considerably lengthened face.

"They were made for one another," said the captain, mournfully; "but what signifies that now?"

"Upon my word and honor," cried Mr. Toots, blurting out his words through a singular combination of awkward chuckles and emotion, "I'm even more sorry than I was before. You know, Captain Gills, I — I positively adore Miss Dombey; — I — I am perfectly sore with loving her;" the burst with which this confession forced itself out of the unhappy Mr. Toots, bespoke the vehemence of his feelings; "but what would be the good of my regarding her in this manner, if I wasn't truly sorry for her feeling pain, whatever was the cause of it. Mine a'n't a selfish affection, you know," said Mr. Toots, in the confidence engendered by his having been a witness of the captain's tenderness. "It's the sort of thing with me, Captain Gills, that if I could be run over — or — or trampled upon — or — or thrown off a very high place — or anything of that sort — for Miss Dombey's sake, it would be the most delightful thing that could happen to me."

All this, Mr. Toots said in a suppressed voice, to prevent its reaching the jealous ears of the Chicken, who objected to the softer emotions; which effort of restraint, coupled with the intensity of his feelings, made him red

to the tips of his ears, and caused him to present such an affecting spectacle of disinterested love to the eyes of Captain Cuttle, that the good captain patted him consolingly on the back, and bade him cheer up.

"Thank'ee, Captain Gills," said Mr. Toots, "it's kind of you, in the midst of your own troubles, to say so. I'm very much obliged to you. As I said before, I really want a friend, and should be glad to have your acquaintance. Although I am very well off," said Mr. Toots, with energy, "you can't think what a miserable beast I am. The hollow crowd, you know, when they see me with the Chicken, and characters of distinction like that, suppose me to be happy; but I'm wretched. I suffer for Miss Dombey, Captain Gills. I can't get through my meals; I have no pleasure in my tailor; I often cry when I'm alone. I assure you it'll be a satisfaction to me to come back to-morrow, or to come back fifty times."

Mr. Toots, with these words, shook the captain's hand; and disguising such traces of his agitation as could be disguised on so short a notice, before the Chicken's penetrating glance, rejoined that eminent gentleman in the shop. The Chicken, who was apt to be jealous of his ascendancy, eyed Captain Cuttle with anything but favor as he took leave of Mr. Toots; but followed his patron without being otherwise demonstrative of his ill-will; leaving the captain oppressed with sorrow; and Rob the Grinder elevated with joy, on account of having had the honor of staring for nearly half an hour, at the conqueror of the Nobby Shropshire One.

Long after Rob was fast asleep in his bed under the counter, the captain sat looking at the fire; and long after there was no fire to look at, the captain sat gazing

on the rusty bars, with unavailing thoughts of Walter and old Sol crowding through his mind. Retirement to the stormy chamber at the top of the house brought no rest with it; and the captain rose up in the morning, sorrowful and unrefreshed.

As soon as the city offices were open, the captain issued forth to the counting-house of Dombey and Son. But there was no opening of the Midshipman's windows that morning. Rob the Grinder, by the captain's orders, left the shutters closed, and the house was as a house of death.

It chanced that Mr. Carker was entering the office, as Captain Cuttle arrived at the door. Receiving the manager's benison gravely and silently, Captain Cuttle made bold to accompany him into his own room.

"Well, Captain Cuttle," said Mr. Carker, taking up his usual position before the fireplace, and keeping on his hat, "this is a bad business."

"You have received the news as was in print yesterday, sir?" said the captain.

"Yes," said Mr. Carker, "we have received it! It was accurately stated. The underwriters suffer a considerable loss. We are very sorry. No help! Such is life!"

Mr. Carker pared his nails delicately with a penknife, and smiled at the captain, who was standing by the door looking at him.

"I excessively regret poor Gay," said Carker, "and the crew. I understand there were some of our very best men among 'em. It always happens so. Many men with families too. A comfort to reflect that poor Gay had no family, Captain Cuttle!"

The captain stood rubbing his chin, and looking at the

manager. The manager glanced at the unopened letters lying on his desk, and took up the newspaper.

"Is there anything I can do for you, Captain Cuttle?" he asked, looking off it, with a smiling and expressive glance at the door.

"I wish you could set my mind at rest, sir, on something it's uneasy about," returned the captain.

"Ay!" exclaimed the manager, "what's that? Come, Captain Cuttle, I must trouble you to be quick, if you please. I am much engaged."

"Look'ee here, sir," said the captain, advancing a step. "Afore my friend Wal'r went on this here disastrous voyage" —

"Come, come, Captain Cuttle," interposed the smiling manager, "don't talk about disastrous voyages in that way. We have nothing to do with disastrous voyages here, my good fellow. You must have begun very early on your day's allowance, captain, if you don't remember that there are hazards in all voyages whether by sea or land. You are not made uneasy by the supposition that young what's-his-name was lost in bad weather that was got up against him in these offices — are you? Fie, captain! Sleep, and soda-water, are the best cures for such uneasiness as that."

"My lad," returned the captain, slowly — "you are a'most a lad to me, and so I don't ask your pardon for that slip of a word, — if you find any pleasure in this here sport, you a'n't the gentleman I took you for, and if you a'n't the gentleman I took you for, may be my mind has call to be uneasy. Now this is what it is, Mr. Carker. — Afore that poor lad went away, according to orders, he told me that he warn't a-going away for his own good, or for promotion, he know'd. It was my be-

lief that he was wrong, and I told him so, and I come here, your head governor being absent, to ask a question or two of you in a civil way, for my own satisfaction. Them questions you answered — free. Now it'll ease my mind to know, when all is over, as it is, and when what can't be cured must be endoored — for which, as a scholar, you'll overhaul the book it's in, and thereof make a note — to know once more, in a word, that I warn't mistaken; that I warn't back'ard in my duty when I didn't tell the old man what Wal'r told me; and that the wind was truly in his sail, when he highsted of it for Barbadoes Harbor. Mr. Carker," said the captain, in the goodness of his nature, "when I was here last, we was very pleasant together. If I a'n't been altogether so pleasant myself this morning, on account of this poor lad, and if I have chafed again' any observation of yours that I might have fended off, my name is Ed'ard Cuttle, and I ask your pardon."

"Captain Cuttle," returned the manager, with all possible politeness, "I must ask you to do me a favor."

"And what is it, sir?" inquired the captain.

"To have the goodness to walk off, if you please," rejoined the manager, stretching forth his arm, "and to carry your jargon somewhere else."

Every knob in the captain's face turned white with astonishment and indignation; even the red rim on his forehead faded, like a rainbow among the gathering clouds.

"I tell you what, Captain Cuttle," said the manager, shaking his forefinger at him, and showing him all his teeth, but still amiably smiling, "I was much too lenient with you when you came here before. You belong to an artful and audacious set of people. In my desire to

save young what's-his-name from being kicked out of this place, neck and crop, my good captain, I tolerated you; but for once, and only once. Now go, my friend!"

The captain was absolutely rooted to the ground, and speechless.

"Go," said the good-humored manager, gathering up his skirts, and standing astride upon the hearth-rug, "like a sensible fellow, and let us have no turning out, or any such violent measures. If Mr. Dombey were here, captain, you might be obliged to leave in a more ignominious manner, possibly. I merely say, Go!"

The captain, laying his ponderous hand upon his chest, to assist himself in fetching a deep breath, looked at Mr. Carker from head to foot, and looked round the little room, as if he did not clearly understand where he was, or in what company.

"You are deep, Captain Cuttle," pursued Carker, with the easy and vivacious frankness of a man of the world who knew the world too well to be ruffled by any discovery of misdoing, when it did not immediately concern himself; "but you are not quite out of soundings, either — neither you nor your absent friend, captain. What have you done with your absent friend, hey?"

Again the captain laid his hand upon his chest. After drawing another deep breath, he conjured himself to "stand by?" But in a whisper.

"You hatch nice little plots, and hold nice little councils, and make nice little appointments, and receive nice little visitors, too, captain, hey?" said Carker, bending his brows upon him, without showing his teeth any the less: "but it's a bold measure to come here afterwards. Not like your discretion! You conspirators, and hiders,

and runners-away, should know better than that. Will you oblige me by going?"

"My lad," gasped the captain, in a choked and trembling voice, and with a curious action going on in the ponderous fist; "there's a many words I could wish to say to you, but I don't rightly know where they're stowed just at present. My young friend, Wal'r, was drownded only last night, according to my reckoning, and it puts me out, you see. But you and me will come alongside o' one another again, my lad," said the captain, holding up his hook, "if we live."

"It will be anything but shrewd in you, my good fellow, if we do," returned the manager, with the same frankness; "for you may rely, I give you fair warning, upon my detecting and exposing you. I don't pretend to be a more moral man than my neighbors, my good captain; but the confidence of this House, or of any member of this House, is not to be abused and undermined while I have eyes and ears. Good-day!" said Mr. Carker, nodding his head.

Captain Cuttle, looking at him steadily (Mr. Carker looked full as steadily at the captain), went out of the office and left him standing astride before the fire, as calm and pleasant as if there were no more spots upon his soul than on his pure white linen, and his smooth sleek skin.

The captain glanced, in passing through the outer counting-house, at the desk where he knew poor Walter had been used to sit, now occupied by another young boy, with a face almost as fresh and hopeful as his on the day when they tapped the famous last bottle but one of the old Madeira, in the little back-parlor. The association of ideas, thus awakened, did the captain a great

deal of good; it softened him in the very height of his anger, and brought the tears into his eyes.

Arrived at the wooden Midshipman's again, and sitting down in a corner of the dark shop, the captain's indignation, strong as it was, could make no head against his grief. Passion seemed not only to do wrong and violence to the memory of the dead, but to be infected by death, and to droop and decline beside it. All the living knaves and liars in the world, were nothing to the honesty and truth of one dear friend.

The only thing the honest captain made out clearly, in this state of mind, besides the loss of Walter was, that with him almost the whole world of Captain Cuttle had been drowned. If he reproached himself sometimes, and keenly too, for having ever connived at Walter's innocent deceit, he thought at least as often of the Mr. Carker whom no sea could ever render up; and the Mr. Dombey, whom he now began to perceive was as far beyond human recall; and the "Heart's Delight," with whom he must never foregather again; and the Lovely Peg, that teak-built and trim ballad, that had gone ashore upon a rock, and split into mere planks and beams of rhyme. The captain sat in the dark shop, thinking of these things, to the entire exclusion of his own injury; and looking with as sad an eye upon the ground, as if in contemplation of their actual fragments as they floated past him.

But the captain was not unmindful, for all that, of such decent and respectful observances in memory of poor Walter, as he felt within his power. Rousing himself, and rousing Rob the Grinder (who in the unnatural twilight was fast asleep), the captain sallied forth with his attendant at his heels, and the door-key in his pocket,

and repairing to one of those convenient slop-selling establishments of which there is abundant choice at the eastern end of London, purchased on the spot two suits of mourning — one for Rob the Grinder, which was immensely too small, and one for himself, which was immensely too large. He also provided Rob with a species of hat, greatly to be admired for its symmetry and usefulness, as well as for a happy blending of the mariner with the coal-heaver; which is usually termed a sou'wester; and which was something of a novelty in connection with the instrument business. In their several garments, which the vendor declared to be such a miracle in point of fit as nothing but a rare combination of fortuitous circumstances ever brought about, and the fashion of which was unparalleled within the memory of the oldest inhabitant, the captain and Grinder immediately arrayed themselves: presenting a spectacle fraught with wonder to all who beheld it.

In this altered form, the captain received Mr. Toots. "I'm took aback, my lad, at present," said the captain, "and will only confirm that there ill news. Tell the young woman to break it gentle to the young lady, and for neither of 'em never to think of me no more — 'special, mind you, that is — though I will think of them, when night comes on a hurricane and seas is mountains rowling, for which overhaul your Doctor Watts, brother, and when found make a note on."

The captain reserved, until some fitter time, the consideration of Mr. Toots's offer of friendship, and thus dismissed him. Captain Cuttle's spirits were so low, in truth, that he half determined, that day, to take no further precautions against surprise from Mrs. MacStinger, but to abandon himself recklessly to chance, and be indif-

ferent to what might happen. As evening came on, he fell into a better frame of mind, however; and spoke much of Walter to Rob the Grinder, whose attention and fidelity he likewise incidentally commended. Rob did not blush to hear the captain earnest in his praises, but sat staring at him, and affecting to snivel with sympathy, and making a feint of being virtuous, and treasuring up every word he said (like a young spy as he was) with very promising deceit.

When Rob had turned in, and was fast asleep, the captain trimmed the candle, put on his spectacles — he had felt it appropriate to take to spectacles on entering into the Instrument Trade, though his eyes were like a hawk's — and opened the prayer-book at the Burial Service. And reading softly to himself, in the little back-parlor, and stopping now and then to wipe his eyes, the captain, in a true and simple spirit, committed Walter's body to the deep.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CONTRASTS.

Turn we our eyes upon two homes; not lying side by side, but wide apart, though both within easy range and reach of the great city of London.

The first is situated in the green and wooded country near Norwood. It is not a mansion; it is of no pretensions as to size; but it is beautifully arranged, and tastefully kept. The lawn, the soft, smooth slope, the flower-garden, the clumps of trees where graceful forms of ash and willow are not wanting, the conservatory, the rustic veranda with sweet-smelling creeping plants entwined about the pillars, the simple exterior of the house, the well-ordered offices, though all upon the diminutive scale proper to a mere cottage, bespeak an amount of elegant comfort within, that might serve for a palace. This indication is not without warrant; for, within it is a house of refinement and luxury. Rich colors, excellently blended, meet the eye at every turn; in the furniture — its proportions admirably devised to suit the shapes and sizes of the small rooms; on the walls; upon the floors; tinging and subduing the light that comes in through the odd glass-doors and windows here and there. There are a few choice prints and pictures, too; in quaint nooks and recesses there is no want of books;

and there are games of skill and chance set forth on tables — fantastic chessmen, dice, backgammon, cards, and billiards.

And yet, amidst this opulence of comfort, there is something in the general air that is not well. Is it that the carpets and the cushions are too soft and noiseless, so that those who move or repose among them seem to act by stealth! Is it that the prints and pictures do not commemorate great thoughts or deeds, or render nature in the poetry of landscape, hall, or hut, but are of one voluptuous cast — mere shows of form and color — and no more? Is it that the books have all their gold outside, and that the titles of the greater part qualify them to be companions of the prints and pictures? Is it that the completeness and the beauty of the place is here and there belied by an affectation of humility, in some unimportant and inexpensive regard, which is as false as the face of the too truly painted portrait hanging yonder, or its original at breakfast in his easy-chair below it? Or is it that, with the daily breath of that original and master of all here, there issues forth some subtle portion of himself, which gives a vague expression of himself to everything about him?

It is Mr. Carker the manager who sits in the easy-chair. A gaudy parrot in a burnished cage upon the table tears at the wires with her beak, and goes walking, upside down, in its dome-top, shaking her house and screeching; but Mr. Carker is indifferent to the bird, and looks with a musing smile at a picture on the opposite wall.

"A most extraordinary accidental likeness, certainly," says he.

Perhaps it is a Juno; perhaps a Potiphar's wife;

perhaps some scornful nymph — according as the Picture dealers found the market, when they christened it. It is the figure of a woman, supremely handsome, who, turning away, but with her face addressed to the spectator, flashes her proud glance upon him.

It is like Edith.

With a passing gesture of his hand at the picture — what! a menace? No; yet something like it. A wave as if triumph? No; yet more like that. An insolent salute wafted from his lips? No; yet like that too — he resumes his breakfast, and calls to the chafing and imprisoned bird, who, coming down into a pendant gilded hoop within the cage, like a great wedding-ring, swings in it, for his delight.

The second home is on the other side of London, near to where the busy great north road of bygone days is silent and almost deserted, except by wayfarers who toil along on foot. It is a poor, small house, barely and sparely furnished, but very clean; and there is even an attempt to decorate it, shown in the homely flowers trained about the porch and in the narrow garden. The neighborhood in which it stands has as little of the country to recommend it, as it has of the town. It is neither of the town or country. The former, like the giant in his travelling boots, has made a stride and passed it, and has set his brick-and-mortar heel a long way in advance; but the intermediate space between the giant's feet, as yet, is only blighted country, and not town; and here, among a few tall chimneys belching smoke all day and night, and among the brick-fields and the lanes where turf is cut, and where the fences tumble down, and where the dusty nettles grow, and where a scrap or two of hedge may yet be seen, and where the bird-catcher still comes

occasionally, though he swears every time to come no more — this second home is to be found.

She who inhabits it, is she who left the first in her devotion to an outcast brother. She withdrew from that home its redeeming spirit, and from its master's breast his solitary angel: but though his liking for her is gone, after this ungrateful slight as he considers it; and though he abandons her altogether in return, an old idea of her is not quite forgotten even by him. Let her flower-garden, in which he never sets his foot, but which is yet maintained, among all his costly alterations, as if she had quitted it but yesterday, bear witness!

Harriet Carker has changed since then, and on her beauty there has fallen a heavier shade than Time of his unassisted self can cast, all-potent as he is — the shadow of anxiety and sorrow, and the daily struggle of a poor existence. But it is beauty still; and still a gentle, quiet, and retiring beauty that must be sought out, for it cannot vaunt itself; if it could, it would be what it is, no more.

Yes. This slight, small, patient figure, neatly dressed in homely stuffs, and indicating nothing but the dull, household virtues, that have so little in common with the received idea of heroism and greatness, unless, indeed, any ray of them should shine through the lives of the great ones of the earth, when it becomes a constellation and is tracked in heaven straightway — this slight, small, patient figure, leaning on the man still young but worn and gray, is she his sister, who, of all the world, went over to him in his shame and put her hand in his, and with a sweet composure and determination, led him hopefully upon his barren way.

"It is early, John," she said. "Why do you go so early?"

"Not many minutes earlier than usual, Harriet. If I have the time to spare, I should like, I think — it's a fancy — to walk once by the house where I took leave of him."

"I wish I had ever seen or known him, John."

"It is better as it is, my dear, remembering his fate."

"But I could not regret it more, though I had known him. Is not your sorrow mine? And if I had, perhaps you would feel that I was a better companion to you in speaking about him, than I may seem now."

"My dearest sister! Is there anything within the range of rejoicing or regret, in which I am not sure of your companionship?"

"I hope you think not, John, for surely there is nothing!"

"How could you be better to me, or nearer to me then, than you are in this, or anything?" said her brother. "I feel that you did know him, Harriet, and that you shared my feelings towards him."

She drew the hand which had been resting on his shoulder, round his neck, and answered, with some hesitation:

"No, not quite."

"True, true," he said; "you think I might have done him no harm if I had allowed myself to know him better?"

"Think! I know it."

"Designedly, Heaven knows I would not," he replied, shaking his head mournfully: "but his reputation was too precious to be perilled by such association. Whether you share that knowledge, or do not, my dear" —

"I do not," she said quietly.

"It is still the truth, Harriet, and my mind is lighter

when I think of him for that which made it so much heavier then." He checked himself in his tone of melancholy, and smiled upon her as he said "Good-by."

"Good-by, dear John! In the evening, at the old time and place, I shall meet you as usual on your way home. Good-by."

The cordial face she lifted up to his to kiss him, was his home, his life, his universe, and yet it was a portion of his punishment and grief; for in the cloud he saw upon it — though serene and calm as any radiant cloud at sunset — and in the constancy and devotion of her life, and in the sacrifice she had made of ease, enjoyment, and hope, he saw the bitter fruits of his old crime, forever ripe and fresh.

She stood at the door looking after him, with her hands loosely clasped in each other, as he made his way over the frowsy and uneven patch of ground which lay before their house, which had once (and not long ago) been a pleasant meadow, and was now a very waste, with a disorderly crop of beginnings of mean houses, rising out of the rubbish, as if they had been unskilfully sown there. Whenever he looked back — as once or twice he did — her cordial face shone like a light upon his heart; but when he plodded on his way, and saw her not, the tears were in her eyes as she stood watching him.

Her pensive form was not long idle at the door. There was daily duty to discharge, and daily work to do — for such commonplace spirits that are not heroic, often work hard with their hands — and Harriet was soon busy with her household tasks. These discharged, and the poor house made quite neat and orderly, she counted her little stock of money with an anxious face,

and went out thoughtfully to buy some necessaries for their table, planning and contriving, as she went, how to save. So sordid are the lives of such low natures, who are not only not heroic to their valets and waiting-women, but have neither valets nor waiting-women to be heroic to withal!

While she was absent, and there was no one in the house, there approached it by a different way from that the brother had taken, a gentleman, a very little past his prime of life perhaps, but of a healthy florid hue, an upright presence, and a bright clear aspect, that was gracious and good-humored. His eyebrows were still black, and so was much of his hair; the sprinkling of gray observable among the latter, graced the former very much, and showed his broad frank brow and honest eyes to great advantage.

After knocking once at the door, and obtaining no response, this gentleman sat down on a bench in the little porch to wait. A certain skilful action of his fingers as he hummed some bars, and beat time on the seat beside him, seemed to denote the musician; and the extraordinary satisfaction he derived from humming something very slow and long, which had no recognizable tune, seemed to denote that he was a scientific one.

The gentleman was still twirling a theme, which seemed to go round and round and round, and in and in and in, and to involve itself like a corkscrew twirled upon a table, without getting any nearer to anything, when Harriet appeared returning. He rose up as she advanced, and stood with his head uncovered.

"You are come again, sir!" she said, faltering.

"I take that liberty," he answered. "May I ask for five minutes of your leisure?"

After a moment's hesitation, she opened the door, and gave him admission to the little parlor. The gentleman sat down there, drew his chair to the table over against her, and said, in a voice that perfectly corresponded to his appearance, and with a simplicity that was very engaging:

"Miss Harriet, you cannot be proud. You signified to me, when I called t'other morning, that you were. Pardon me, if I say that I looked into your face while you spoke, and that it contradicted you. I look into it again," he added, laying his hand gently on her arm, for an instant, "and it contradicts you more and more."

She was somewhat confused and agitated, and could make no ready answer.

"It is the mirror of truth," said her visitor, "and gentleness. Excuse my trusting to it, and returning."

His manner of saying these words, divested them entirely of the character of compliments. It was so plain, grave, unaffected, and sincere, that she bent her head, as if at once to thank him and acknowledge his sincerity.

"The disparity between our ages," said the gentleman, "and the plainness of my purpose, empower me, I am glad to think, to speak my mind. That is my mind; and so you see me for the second time."

"There is a kind of pride, sir," she returned, after a moment's silence, "or what may be supposed to be pride, which is mere duty. I hope I cherish no other."

"For yourself," he said.

"For myself."

"But — pardon me" — suggested the gentleman. "For your brother John?"

"Proud of his love, I am," said Harriet, looking full

upon her visitor, and changing her manner on the instant — not that it was less composed and quiet, but that there was a deep impassioned earnestness in it that made the very tremble in her voice a part of her firmness, "and proud of him. Sir, you who strangely know the story of his life, and repeated it to me when you were here last" —

"Merely to make my way into your confidence," interposed the gentleman. "For Heaven's sake, don't suppose" —

"I am sure," she said, "you revived it, in my hearing, with a kind and good purpose. I am quite sure of it."

"I thank you," returned her visitor, pressing her hand hastily. "I am much obliged to you. You do me justice, I assure you. You were going to say, that I, who know the story of John Carker's life" —

"May think it pride in me," she continued, "when I say that I am proud of him! I *am*. You know the time was, when I was not — when I could not be — but that is past. The humility of many years, the uncomplaining expiation, the true repentance, the terrible regret, the pain I know he has even in my affection, which he thinks has cost me dear, though Heaven knows I am happy, but for his sorrow! — oh sir, after what I have seen, let me conjure you, if you are in any place of power, and are ever wronged, never, for any wrong, inflict a punishment that cannot be recalled; while there is a GOD above us to work changes in the hearts He made."

"Your brother is an altered man," returned the gentleman, compassionately. "I assure you, I don't doubt it."

"He was an altered man when he did wrong," said

Harriet. "He is an altered man again, and is his true self now, believe me, sir."

"But we go on," said her visitor, rubbing his forehead, in an absent manner, with his hand, and then drumming thoughtfully on the table, "we go on in our clock-work routine, from day to day, and can't make out, or follow, these changes. They — they're a metaphysical sort of thing. We — we haven't leisure for it. We — we haven't courage. They're not taught at schools or colleges, and we don't know how to set about it. In short, we are so d——d business-like," said the gentleman, walking to the window, and back, and sitting down again, in a state of extreme dissatisfaction and vexation.

"I am sure," said the gentleman, rubbing his forehead again, and drumming on the table as before; "I have good reason to believe that a jog-trot life, the same from day to day, would reconcile one to anything. One don't see anything, one don't hear anything, one don't know anything; that's the fact. We go on taking everything for granted, and so we go on, until whatever we do, good, bad, or indifferent, we do from habit. Habit is all I shall have to report, when I am called upon to plead to my conscience on my death-bed. 'Habit,' says I; 'I was deaf, dumb, blind, and paralytic, to a million things, from habit.' 'Very business-like indeed, Mr. What's-your-name,' says Conscience, 'but it won't do here!'"

The gentleman got up and walked to the window again and back: seriously uneasy, though giving his uneasiness this peculiar expression.

"Miss Harriet," he said, resuming his chair, "I wish you would let me serve you. Look at me; I

ought to look honest, for I know I am so, at present. Do I?"

"Yes," she answered with a smile.

"I believe every word you have said," he returned. "I am full of self-reproach that I might have known this and seen this, and known you and seen you, any time these dozen years, and that I never have. I hardly know how I ever got here — creature that I am, not only of my own habit, but of other people's! But having done so, let me do something. I ask it in all honor and respect. You inspire me with both, in the highest degree. Let me do something."

"We are contented, sir."

"No, no, not quite," returned the gentleman. "I think not quite. There are some little comforts that might smooth your life, and his. And his!" he repeated, fancying that had made some impression on her. "I have been in the habit of thinking that there was nothing wanting to be done for him; that it was all settled and over; in short, of not thinking at all about it. I am different now. Let me do something for him. You too," said the visitor, with careful delicacy, "have need to watch your health closely, for his sake, and I fear it fails."

"Whoever you may be, sir," answered Harriet, raising her eyes to his face, "I am deeply grateful to you. I feel certain that in all you say, you have no object in the world but kindness to us. But years have passed since we began this life; and to take from my brother any part of what has so endeared him to me, and so proved his better resolution — any fragment of the merit of his unassisted, obscure, and forgotten reparation — would be to diminish the comfort it will be to

him and me, when that time comes to each of us, of which you spoke just now. I thank you better with these tears than any words. Believe it, pray."

The gentleman was moved, and put the hand she held out to his lips, much as a tender father might kiss the hand of a dutiful child. But more reverently.

"If the day should ever come," said Harriet, "when he is restored, in part, to the position he lost" —

"Restored!" cried the gentleman, quickly. "How can that be hoped for? In whose hands does the power of any restoration lie? It is no mistake of mine, surely, to suppose that his having gained the priceless blessing of his life, is one cause of the animosity shown to him by his brother."

"You touch upon a subject that is never breathed between us; not even between us," said Harriet.

"I beg your forgiveness," said the visitor. "I should have known it. I entreat you to forget that I have done so, inadvertently. And now, as I dare urge no more — as I am not sure that I have a right to do so — though Heaven knows, even that doubt may be habit," said the gentleman, rubbing his head, as despondently as before, "let me; though a stranger, yet no stranger; ask two favors."

"What are they?" she inquired.

"The first, that if you should see cause to change your resolution, you will suffer me to be as your right hand. My name shall then be at your service; it is useless now, and always insignificant."

"Our choice of friends," she answered, smiling faintly, "is not so great, that I need any time for consideration. I can promise that."

"The second, that you will allow me sometimes, say

every Monday morning, at nine o'clock — habit again — I must be business-like," said the gentleman, with a whimsical inclination to quarrel with himself on that head, "in walking past, to see you at the door or window. I don't ask to come in, as your brother will be gone out at that hour. I don't ask to speak to you. I merely ask to see, for the satisfaction of my own mind, that you are well, and without intrusion to remind you, by the sight of me, that you have a friend — an elderly friend, gray-haired already, and fast growing grayer — whom you may ever command."

The cordial face looked up in his; confided in it; and promised.

"I understand, as before," said the gentleman, rising, "that you purpose not to mention my visit to John Carker, lest he should be at all distressed by my acquaintance with his history. I am glad of it, for it is out of the ordinary course of things, and — habit again!" said the gentleman, checking himself impatiently, "as if there were no better course than the ordinary course!"

With that he turned to go, and walking, bare-headed, to the outside of the little porch, took leave of her with such a happy mixture of unconstrained respect and unaffected interest, as no breeding could have taught, no truth mistrusted, and nothing but a pure and single heart expressed.

Many half-forgotten emotions were awakened in the sister's mind by this visit. It was so very long since any other visitor had crossed their threshold; it was so very long since any voice of sympathy had made sad music in her ears; that the stranger's figure remained present to her, hours afterwards, when she sat at the window, plying her needle; and his words seemed newly

spoken, again and again. He had touched the spring that opened her whole life; and if she lost him for a short space, it was only among the many shapes of the one great recollection of which that life was made.

Musing and working by turns; now constraining herself to be steady at her needle for a long time together, and now letting her work fall, unregarded, on her lap, and straying wheresoever her busier thoughts led, Harriet Carker found the hours glide by her, and the day steal on. The morning, which had been bright and clear, gradually became overcast; a sharp wind set in; the rain fell heavily; and a dark mist drooping over the distant town, hid it from the view.

She often looked with compassion, at such a time, upon the stragglers who came wandering into London, by the great highway hard-by, and who, footsore and weary, and gazing fearfully at the huge town before them, as if foreboding that their misery there would be but as a drop of water in the sea, or as a grain of sea-sand on the shore, went shrinking on, cowering before the angry weather, and looking as if the very elements rejected them. Day after day, such travellers crept past, but always, as she thought, in one direction — always towards the town. Swallowed up in one phase or other of its immensity, towards which they seemed impelled by a desperate fascination, they never returned. Food for the hospitals, the church-yards, the prisons, the river, fever, madness, vice, and death, — they passed on to the monster, roaring in the distance, and were lost.

The chill wind was howling, and the rain was falling, and the day was darkening moodily, when Harriet, raising her eyes from the work on which she had long since

been engaged with unremitting constancy, saw one of these travellers approaching.

A woman. A solitary woman of some thirty years of age; tall; well-formed; handsome; miserably dressed; the soil of many country roads in varied weather — dust, chalk, clay, gravel — clotted on her gray cloak by the streaming wet; no bonnet on her head, nothing to defend her rich black hair from the rain, but a torn handkerchief; with the fluttering ends of which, and with her hair, the wind blinded her so that she often stopped to push them back, and look upon the way she was going.

She was in the act of doing so, when Harriet observed her. As her hands, parting on her sun-burnt forehead, swept across her face, and threw aside the hindrances that encroached upon it, there was a reckless and regardless beauty in it; a dauntless and depraved indifference to more than weather: a carelessness of what was cast upon her bare head from heaven or earth: that, coupled with her misery and loneliness, touched the heart of her fellow-woman. She thought of all that was perverted and debased within her, no less than without: of modest graces of the mind, hardened and steeled, like these attractions of the person; of the many gifts of the Creator flung to the winds like the wild hair; of all the beautiful ruin upon which the storm was beating and the night was coming.

Thinking of this, she did not turn away with a delicate indignation — too many of her own compassionate and tender sex too often do — but pitied her.

Her fallen sister came on, looking far before her, trying with her eager eyes to pierce the mist in which the city was enshrouded, and glancing, now and then, from

side to side, with the bewildered and uncertain aspect of a stranger. Though her tread was bold and courageous, she was fatigued, and after a moment of irresolution, sat down upon a heap of stones; seeking no shelter from the rain, but letting it rain on her as it would.

She was now opposite the house; raising her head after resting it for a moment on both hands, her eyes met those of Harriet.

In a moment, Harriet was at the door; and the other, rising from her seat at her beck, came slowly, and with no conciliatory look, towards her.

"Why do you rest in the rain?" said Harriet, gently.

"Because I have no other resting-place," was the reply.

"But there are many places of shelter near here. This," referring to the little porch, "is better than where you were. You are very welcome to rest here."

The wanderer looked at her, in doubt and surprise, but without any expression of thankfulness; and sitting down, and taking off one of her worn shoes to beat out the fragments of stone and dust that were inside, showed that her foot was cut and bleeding.

Harriet uttering an expression of pity, the traveller looked up with a contemptuous and incredulous smile.

"Why what's a torn foot to such as me?" she said. "And what's a torn foot in such as me, to such as you?"

"Come in and wash it," answered Harriet, mildly, "and let me give you something to bind it up."

The woman caught her arm, and drawing it before her own eyes, hid them against it, and wept. Not like a woman, but like a stern man surprised into that weakness; with a violent heaving of her breast, and struggle for recovery, that showed how unusual the emotion was with her.

She submitted to be led into the house, and, evidently more in gratitude than in any care for herself, washed and bound the injured place. Harriet then put before her fragments of her own frugal dinner, and when she had eaten of them, though sparingly, besought her, before resuming her road (which she showed her anxiety to do), to dry her clothes before the fire. Again, more in gratitude than with any evidence of concern in her own behalf, she sat down in front of it, and unbinding the handkerchief about her head, and letting her thick wet hair fall down below her waist, sat drying it with the palms of her hands, and looking at the blaze.

"I dare say you are thinking," she said, lifting her head suddenly, "that I used to be handsome, once. I believe I was — I know I was. Look here!"

She held up her hair roughly with both hands; seizing it as if she would have torn it out; then, threw it down again, and flung it back as though it were a heap of serpents.

"Are you a stranger in this place?" asked Harriet.

"A stranger!" she returned, stopping between each short reply, and looking at the fire, "Yes. Ten or a dozen years a stranger. I have had no almanac where I have been. Ten or a dozen years. I don't know this part. It's much altered since I went away."

"Have you been far?"

"Very far. Months upon months over the sea and far away even then. I have been where convicts go," she added, looking full upon her entertainer. "I have been one myself."

"Heaven help you and forgive you!" was the gentle answer.

"Ah! Heaven help me and forgive me!" she re-

turned, nodding her head at the fire. "If man would help some of us a little more, God would forgive us all the sooner perhaps."

But she was softened by the earnest manner, and the cordial face so full of mildness and so free from judgment, of her, and said, less hardily:

"We may be about the same age, you and me. If I am older, it is not above a year or two. Oh think of that!"

She opened her arms, as though the exhibition of her outward form would show the moral wretch she was; and letting them drop at her sides, hung down her head.

"There is nothing we may not hope to repair; it is never too late to amend," said Harriet. "You are penitent" —

"No," she answered. "I am not! I can't be. I am no such thing. Why should *I* be penitent, and all the world go free. They talk to me of my penitence. Who's penitent for the wrongs that have been done to me!"

She rose up, bound her handkerchief about her head, and turned to move away.

"Where are you going?" said Harriet.

"Yonder," she answered, pointing with her hand. "To London."

"Have you any home to go to?"

"I think I have a mother. She's as much a mother, as her dwelling is a home," she answered with a bitter laugh.

"Take this," cried Harriet, putting money in her hand. "Try to do well. It is very little, but for one day it may keep you from harm."

"Are you married?" said the other, faintly, as she took it.

"No. I live here with my brother. We have not much to spare, or I would give you more."

"Will you let me kiss you?"

Seeing no scorn or repugnance in her face, the object of her charity bent over her as she asked the question, and pressed her lips against her cheek. Once more she caught her arm, and covered her eyes with it; and then was gone.

Gone into the deepening night, and howling wind, and pelting rain; urging her way on towards the mist-enshrouded city where the blurred lights gleamed; and with her black hair and disordered head-gear, fluttering round her reckless face.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ANOTHER MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

In an ugly and dark room, an old woman, ugly and dark too, sat listening to the wind and rain, and crouching over a meagre fire. More constant to the last-named occupation than the first, she never changed her attitude, unless, when any stray drops of rain fell hissing on the smouldering embers, to raise her head with an awakened attention to the whistling and pattering outside, and gradually to let it fall again lower and lower and lower as she sunk into a brooding state of thought, in which the noises of the night were as indistinctly regarded as is the monotonous rolling of a sea by one who sits in contemplation on its shore.

There was no light in the room save that which the fire afforded. Glaring sullenly from time to time like the eye of a fierce beast half asleep, it revealed no objects that needed to be jealous of a better display. A heap of rags, a heap of bones, a wretched bed, two or three mutilated chairs or stools, the black walls and blacker ceiling, were all its winking brightness shone upon. As the old woman, with a gigantic and distorted image of herself, thrown half upon the wall behind her, half upon the roof above, sat bending over the few loose bricks within which it was pent, on the damp hearth of the chimney — for there was no stove — she looked as

if she were watching at some witch's altar for a favorable token; and but that the movement of her chattering jaws and trembling chin was too frequent and too fast for the slow flickering of the fire, it would have seemed an illusion wrought by the light, as it came and went, upon a face as motionless as the form to which it belonged.

If Florence could have stood within the room and looked upon the original of the shadow thrown upon the wall and roof, as it cowered thus over the fire, a glance might have sufficed to recall the figure of Good Mrs. Brown; notwithstanding that her childish recollection of that terrible old woman was as grotesque and exaggerated a presentment of the truth, perhaps, as the shadow on the wall. But Florence was not there to look on; and Good Mrs. Brown remained unrecognized, and sat staring at her fire, unobserved.

Attracted by a louder sputtering than usual, as the rain came hissing down the chimney in a little stream, the old woman raised her head, impatiently, to listen afresh. And this time she did not drop it again; for there was a hand upon the door, and a footstep in the room.

"Who's that?" she said, looking over her shoulder.

"One who brings you news," was the answer, in a woman's voice.

"News? Where from?"

"From abroad."

"From beyond seas?" cried the old woman, starting up.

"Ay, from beyond seas."

The old woman raked the fire together, hurriedly, and

going close to her visitor who had entered, and shut the door, and who now stood in the middle of the room, put her hand upon the drenched cloak, and turned the unresisting figure, so as to have it in the full light of the fire. She did not find what she had expected, whatever that might be; for she let the cloak go again, and uttered a querulous cry of disappointment and misery.

"What is the matter?" asked her visitor.

"Oho! Oho!" cried the old woman, turning her face upward, with a terrible howl.

"What is the matter?" asked the visitor again.

"It's not my gal!" cried the old woman, tossing up her arms, and clasping her hands above her head. "Where's my Alice? Where's my handsome daughter? They've been the death of her!"

"They've not been the death of her yet, if your name's Marwood," said the visitor.

"Have you seen my gal then?" cried the old woman. "Has she wrote to me?"

"She said you couldn't read," returned the other.

"No more I can!" exclaimed the old woman, wringing her hands.

"Have you no light here?" said the other, looking round the room.

The old woman, mumbling and shaking her head, and muttering to herself about her handsome daughter, brought a candle from a cupboard in the corner, and thrusting it into the fire with a trembling hand, lighted it with some difficulty and set it on the table. Its dirty wick burnt dimly at first, being choked in its own grease; and when the bleared eyes and failing sight of the old woman could distinguish anything by its light, her visitor was sitting with her arms folded, her eyes turned down-

wards, and a handkerchief she had worn upon her head lying on the table by her side.

"She sent to me by word of mouth then, my gal, Alice?" mumbled the old woman, after waiting for some moments. "What did she say?"

"Look," returned the visitor.

The old woman repeated the word in a scared uncertain way; and, shading her eyes, looked at the speaker, round the room, and at the speaker once again.

"Alice said look again, mother;" and the speaker fixed her eyes upon her.

Again the old woman looked round the room, and at her visitor, and round the room once more. Hastily seizing the candle, and rising from her seat, she held it to the visitor's face, uttered a loud cry, set down the light, and fell upon her neck!

"It's my gal! It's my Alice! It's my handsome daughter, living and come back!" screamed the old woman, rocking herself to and fro upon the breast that coldly suffered her embrace. "It's my gal! It's my Alice! It's my handsome daughter, living and come back!" she screamed again, dropping on the floor before her, clasping her knees, laying her head against them, and still rocking herself to and fro with every frantic demonstration of which her vitality was capable.

"Yes, mother," returned Alice, stooping forward for a moment, and kissing her, but endeavoring, even in the act, to disengage herself from her embrace. "I am here, at last. Let go, mother; let go. Get up, and sit in your chair. What good does this do?"

"She's come back harder than she went!" cried the mother, looking up in her face, and still holding to her

knees. "She don't care for me! after all these years, and all the wretched life I've led!"

"Why, mother!" said Alice, shaking her ragged skirts to detach the old woman from them: "there are two sides to that. There have been years for me as well as you, and there has been wretchedness for me as well as you. Get up, get up!"

Her mother rose, and cried, and wrung her hands, and stood at a little distance gazing on her. Then she took the candle again, and going round her, surveyed her from head to foot, making a low moaning all the time. Then she put the candle down, resumed her chair, and beating her hands together to a kind of weary tune, and rolling herself from side to side, continued moaning and wailing to herself.

Alice got up, took off her wet cloak, and laid it aside. That done, she sat down as before, and with her arms folded, and her eyes gazing at the fire, remained silently listening with a contemptuous face to her old mother's inarticulate complainings.

"Did you expect to see me return as youthful as I went away, mother?" she said at length, turning her eyes upon the old woman. "Did you think a foreign life, like mine, was good for good looks? One would believe so to hear you!"

"It a'n't that!" cried the mother. "*She* knows it!"

"What is it then?" returned the daughter. "It had best be something that don't last, mother, or my way out is easier than my way in."

"Hear that!" exclaimed the mother. "After all these years she threatens to desert me in the moment of her coming back again!"

"I tell you, mother, for the second time, there have

been years for me as well as you," said Alice. "Come back harder? Of course I have come back harder. What else did you expect?"

"Harder to me! To her own dear mother!" cried the old woman.

"I don't know who began to harden me, if my own dear mother didn't," she returned, sitting with her folded arms, and knitted brows, and compressed lips as if she were bent on excluding, by force, every softer feeling from her breast. "Listen, mother, to a word or two. If we understand each other now, we shall not fall out any more, perhaps. I went away a girl, and have come back a woman. I went away undutiful enough, and have come back no better, you may swear. But have you been very dutiful to me?"

"I!" cried the old woman. "To my own gal! A mother dutiful to her own child!"

"It sounds unnatural, don't it?" returned the daughter, looking coldly on her with her stern, regardless, hardy, beautiful face; "but I have thought of it sometimes, in the course of *my* lone years, till I have got used to it. I have heard some talk about duty first and last; but it has always been of my duty to other people. I have wondered now and then — to pass away the time — whether no one ever owed any duty to me."

Her mother sat mowing, and mumbling, and shaking her head, but whether angrily, or remorsefully, or in denial, or only in her physical infirmity, did not appear.

"There was a child called Alice Marwood," said the daughter, with a laugh, and looking down at herself in terrible derision of herself, "born, among poverty and neglect, and nursed in it. Nobody taught her, nobody stepped forward to help her, nobody cared for her."

"Nobody!" echoed the mother, pointing to herself, and striking her breast.

"The only care she knew," returned the daughter, "was to be beaten, and stinted, and abused sometimes; and she might have done better without that. She lived in homes like this, and in the streets, with a crowd of little wretches like herself; and yet she brought good looks out of this childhood. So much the worse for her. She had better have been hunted and worried to death for ugliness."

"Go on! go on!" exclaimed the mother.

"I am going on," returned the daughter. "There was a girl called Alice Marwood. She was handsome. She was taught too late, and taught all wrong. She was too well cared for, too well trained, too well helped on, too much looked after. You were very fond of her — you were better off then. What came to that girl comes to thousands every year. It was only ruin, and she was born to it."

"After all these years!" whined the old woman. "My gal begins with this."

"She'll soon have ended," said the daughter. "There was a criminal called Alice Marwood — a girl still, but deserted and an outcast. And she was tried, and she was sentenced. And lord, how the gentlemen in the court talked about it! and how grave the judge was, on her duty, and on her having perverted the gifts of nature — as if he didn't know better than anybody there, that they had been made curses to her! — and how he preached about the strong arm of the Law — so very strong to save her, when she was an innocent and helpless little wretch! and how solemn and religious it all was! I have thought of that, many times since, to be sure!"

She folded her arms tightly on her breast, and laughed in a tone that made the howl of the old woman musical.

"So Alice Marwood was transported, mother," she pursued, "and was sent to learn her duty, where there was twenty times less duty, and more wickedness, and wrong, and infamy, than here. And Alice Marwood is come back a woman. Such a woman as she ought to be, after all this. In good time, there will be more solemnity, and more fine talk, and more strong arm, most likely, and there will be an end of her; but the gentlemen needn't be afraid of being thrown out of work. There's crowds of little wretches, boy and girl, growing up in any of the streets they live in, that'll keep them to it till they've made their fortunes."

The old woman leaned her elbows on the table, and resting her face upon her two hands, made a show of being in great distress — or really was, perhaps.

"There! I have done, mother," said the daughter, with a motion of her head, as if in dismissal of the subject. "I have said enough. Don't let you and I talk of being dutiful, whatever we do. Your childhood was like mine, I suppose. So much the worse for both of us. I don't want to blame you, or to defend myself; why should I? That's all over, long ago. But I am a woman — not a girl, now — and you and I needn't make a show of our history, like the gentlemen in the court. *We* know all about it, well enough."

Lost and degraded as she was, there was a beauty in her, both of face and form, which, even in its worst expression, could not but be recognized as such by any one regarding her with the least attention. As she subsided into silence, and her face which had been harshly agi-

tated, quieted down; while her dark eyes, fixed upon the fire, exchanged the reckless light that had animated them, for one that was softened by something like sorrow; there shone through all her wayworn misery and fatigue, a ray of the departed radiance of the fallen angel.

Her mother, after watching her for some time without speaking, ventured to steal her withered hand a little nearer to her across the table; and finding that she permitted this, to touch her face, and smooth her hair. With the feeling, as it seemed, that the old woman was at least sincere in this show of interest, Alice made no movement to check her, so, advancing by degrees, she bound up her daughter's hair afresh, took off her wet shoes, if they deserved the name, spread something dry upon her shoulders, and hovered humbly about her, muttering to herself, as she recognized her old features and expression more and more.

"You are very poor, mother, I see," said Alice, looking round, when she had sat thus for some time.

"Bitter poor, my deary," replied the old woman.

She admired her daughter, and was afraid of her. Perhaps her admiration, such as it was, had originated long ago, when she first found anything that was beautiful appearing in the midst of the squalid fight of her existence. Perhaps her fear was referable, in some sort, to the retrospect she had so lately heard. Be this as it might, she stood, submissively and deferentially, before her child, and inclined her head, as if in a pitiful entreaty to be spared any further reproach.

"How have you lived?"

"By begging, my deary."

"And pilfering, mother?"

"Sometimes, Ally — in a very small way. I am old and timid. I have taken trifles from children now and then, my deary, but not often. I have tramped about the country, pet, and I know what I know. I have watched."

"Watched?" returned the daughter, looking at her.

"I have hung about a family, my deary," said the mother, even more humbly and submissively than before.

"What family?"

"Hush, darling. Don't be angry with me, I did it for the love of you. In memory of my poor gal beyond seas." She put out her hand deprecatingly, and drawing it back again, laid it on her lips.

"Years ago, my deary," she pursued, glancing timidly at the attentive and stern face opposed to her. "I came across his little child, by chance."

"Whose child?"

"Not his, Alice deary; don't look at me like that; not his. How could it be his? You know he has none."

"Whose then?" returned the daughter. "You said his."

"Hush, Ally; you frighten me, deary. Mr. Dombey's — only Mr. Dombey's. Since then, darling, I have seen them often. I have seen *him*."

In uttering this last word, the old woman shrunk and recoiled, as if with a sudden fear that her daughter would strike her. But though the daughter's face was fixed upon her, and expressed the most vehement passion, she remained still: except that she clinched her arms tighter and tighter within each other, on her bosom, as if to restrain them by that means from doing an in-

jury to herself, or some one else, in the blind fury of the wrath that suddenly possessed her.

"Little he thought who I was!" said the old woman, shaking her clinched hand.

"And little he cared!" muttered her daughter, between her teeth.

"But there we were," said the old woman, "face to face. I spoke to him, and he spoke to me. I sat and watched him as he went away down a long grove of trees; and at every step he took, I cursed him soul and body."

"He will thrive in spite of that," returned the daughter disdainfully.

"Ay, he is thriving," said the mother.

She held her peace; for the face and form before her were unshaped by rage. It seemed as if the bosom would burst with the emotions that strove within it. The effort that constrained and held it pent up, was no less formidable than the rage itself: no less bespeaking the violent and dangerous character of the woman who made it. But it succeeded, and she asked, after a silence:

"Is he married?"

"No, deary," said the mother.

"Going to be?"

"Not that I know of, deary. But his master and friend is married. Oh, we may give him joy! We may give 'em all joy!" cried the old woman, hugging herself with her lean arms in her exultation. "Nothing but joy to us will come of that marriage. Mind me!"

The daughter looked at her for an explanation.

"But you are wet and tired: hungry and thirsty,"

said the old woman, hobbling to the cupboard: "and there's little here, and little" — diving down into her pocket, and jingling a few halfpence on the table — "little here. Have you any money, Alice, deary?"

The covetous, sharp, eager face with which she asked the question and looked on, as her daughter took out of her bosom the little gift she had so lately received, told almost as much of the history of this parent and child as the child herself had told in words.

"Is that all?" said the mother.

"I have no more. I should not have this, but for charity."

"But for charity, eh, deary?" said the old woman, bending greedily over the table to look at the money, which she appeared distrustful of her daughter's still retaining in her hand, and gazing on. "Humph! six and six is twelve and six eighteen — so — we must make the most of it. I'll go buy something to eat and drink."

With greater alacrity than might have been expected in one of her appearance — for age and misery seemed to have made her as decrepit as ugly — she began to occupy her trembling hands in tying an old bonnet on her head, and folding a torn shawl about herself: still eying the money in her daughter's hand, with the same sharp desire.

"What joy is to come to us of this marriage, mother?" asked the daughter. "You have not told me that."

"The joy," she replied, attiring herself, with fumbling fingers, "of no love at all, and much pride and hate, my deary. The joy of confusion and strife among 'em, proud as they are, and of danger — danger, Alice!"

"What danger?"

"*I* have seen what I have seen. *I* know what I

know!" chuckled the mother. "Let some look to it. Let some be upon their guard. My gal may keep good company yet!"

Then, seeing that in the wondering earnestness with which her daughter regarded her, her hand involuntarily closed upon the money, the old woman made more speed to secure it, and hurriedly added, "but I'll go buy something; I'll go buy something."

As she stood with her hand stretched out before her daughter, her daughter, glancing again at the money, put it to her lips before parting with it.

"What, Ally! Do you kiss it?" chuckled the old woman. "That's like me — I often do. Oh, it's so good to us!" squeezing her own tarnished halfpence up to her bag of a throat, "so good to us in everything but not coming in heaps!"

"I kiss it, mother," said the daughter, "or I did then — I don't know that I ever did before — for the giver's sake."

"The giver, eh, deary?" retorted the old woman, whose dimmed eyes glistened as she took it. "Ay! I'll kiss it for the giver's sake, too, when the giver can make it go farther. But I'll go spend it, deary. I'll be back directly."

"You seem to say you know a great deal, mother," said the daughter, following her to the door with her eyes. "You have grown very wise since we parted."

"Know!" croaked the old woman, coming back a step or two, "I know more than you think. I know more than *he* thinks, deary, as I'll tell you by-and-by. I know all about him."

The daughter smiled incredulously.

"I know of his brother, Alice," said the old woman,

stretching out her neck with a leer of malice absolutely frightful, "who might have been where you have been — for stealing money — and who lives with his sister, over yonder, by the north road out of London."

"Where?"

"By the north road out of London, deary. You shall see the house, if you like. It a'n't much to boast of, genteel as his own is. No, no, no," cried the old woman shaking her head and laughing; for her daughter had started up, "not now; it's too far off; it's by the milestone, where the stones are heaped; — to-morrow, deary, if it's fine, and you are in the humor. But I'll go spend" —

"Stop!" and the daughter flung herself upon her, with her former passion raging like a fire. "The sister is a fair-faced devil, with brown hair?"

The old woman, amazed and terrified, nodded her head.

"I see the shadow of him in her face! It's a red house standing by itself. Before the door there is a small green porch."

Again the old woman nodded.

"In which I sat to-day! Give me back the money."

"Alice! Deary!"

"Give me back the money, or you'll be hurt."

She forced it from the old woman's hand as she spoke, and utterly indifferent to her complainings and entreaties, threw on the garments she had taken off, and hurried out, with headlong speed.

The mother followed, limping after her as she could, and expostulating with no more effect upon her than upon the wind and rain and darkness that encompassed them. Obdurate and fierce in her own purpose, and in-

different to all besides, the daughter defied the weather and the distance, as if she had known no travel or fatigue, and made for the house where she had been relieved. After some quarter of an hour's walking, the old woman, spent and out of breath, ventured to hold by her skirts; but she ventured no more, and they travelled on in silence through the wet and gloom. If the mother now and then uttered a word of complaint, she stifled it lest her daughter should break away from her and leave her behind; and the daughter was dumb.

It was within an hour or so of midnight, when they left the regular streets behind them, and entered on the deeper gloom of that neutral ground where the house was situated. The town lay in the distance, lurid and lowering; the bleak wind howled over the open space; all around was black, wild, desolate.

"This is a fit place for me!" said the daughter, stopping to look back. "I thought so, when I was here before, to-day."

"Alice, my deary," cried the mother, pulling her gently by the skirt. "Alice!"

"What now, mother?"

"Don't give the money back, my darling; please don't. We can't afford it. We want supper, deary. Money is money, whoever gives it. Say what you will, but keep the money."

"See there!" was all the daughter's answer. "That is the house I mean. Is that it?"

The old woman nodded in the affirmative; and a few more paces brought them to the threshold. There was the light of fire and candle in the room where Alice had sat to dry her clothes; and on her knocking at the door, John Carker appeared from that room.

He was surprised to see such visitors at such an hour, and asked Alice what she wanted.

"I want your sister," she said. "The woman who gave me money to-day."

At the sound of her raised voice Harriet came out.

"Oh!" said Alice. "You are here! Do you remember me?"

"Yes?" she answered, wondering.

The face that had humbled itself before her, looked on her now with such invincible hatred and defiance; and the hand that had gently touched her arm, was clinched with such a show of evil purpose, as if it would gladly strangle her; that she drew close to her brother for protection.

"That I could speak with you, and not know you! That I could come near you, and not feel what blood was running in your veins, by the tingling of my own!" said Alice with a menacing gesture.

"What do you mean? What have I done?"

"Done!" returned the other. "You have sat me by your fire; you have given me food and money; you have bestowed your compassion on me! You! whose name I spit upon!"

The old woman, with a malevolence that made her ugliness quite awful, shook her withered hand at the brother and sister in confirmation of her daughter, but plucked her by the skirts again, nevertheless, imploring her to keep the money.

"If I dropped a tear upon your hand, may it wither it up! If I spoke a gentle word in your hearing, may it deafen you! If I touched you with my lips, may the touch be poison to you! A curse upon this roof that gave me shelter! Sorrow and shame upon your head! Ruin upon all belonging to you!"

As she said the words, she threw the money down upon the ground, and spurned it with her foot.

"I tread it in the dust: I wouldn't take it if it paved my way to Heaven! I would the bleeding foot that brought me here to-day, had rotted off, before it led me to your house!"

Harriet, pale and trembling, restrained her brother, and suffered her to go on uninterrupted.

"It was well that I should be pitied and forgiven by you, or any one of your name, in the first hour of my return! It was well that you should act the kind good lady to me! I'll thank you when I die; I'll pray for you, and all your race, you may be sure!"

With a fierce action of her hand, as if she sprinkled hatred on the ground, and with it devoted those who were standing there to destruction, she looked up once at the black sky, and strode out into the wild night.

The mother, who had plucked at her skirts again and again in vain, and had eyed the money lying on the threshold with an absorbing greed that seemed to concentrate her faculties upon it, would have prowled about, until the house was dark, and then groped in the mire on the chance of repossessing herself of it. But the daughter drew her away, and they set forth, straight, on their return to their dwelling; the old woman whimpering and bemoaning their loss upon the road, and fretfully bewailing, as openly as she dared, the undutiful conduct of her handsome girl in depriving her of a supper, on the very first night of their reunion.

Supperless to bed she went, saving for a few coarse fragments; and those she sat mumbling and munching over a scrap of fire, long after her undutiful daughter lay asleep.

Were this miserable mother, and this miserable daughter, only the reduction to their lowest grade, of certain social vices sometimes prevailing higher up? In this round world of many circles within circles, do we make a weary journey from the high grade to the low, to find at last that they lie close together, that the two extremes touch, and that our journey's end is but our starting-place? Allowing for great difference of stuff and texture, was the pattern of this woof repeated among gentle blood at all?

Say, Edith Dombey! And Cleopatra, best of mothers, let us have your testimony!

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE HAPPY PAIR.

THE dark blot on the street is gone. Mr. Dombey's mansion, if it be a gap among the other houses any longer, is only so because it is not to be vied with in its brightness, and haughtily cast them off. The saying is, that home is home, be it never so homely. If it hold good in the opposite contingency, and home is home be it never so stately, what an altar to the Household Gods is raised up here!

Lights are sparkling in the windows this evening, and the ruddy glow of fires is warm and bright upon the hangings and soft carpets, and the dinner waits to be served, and the dinner-table is handsomely set forth, though only for four persons, and the sideboard is cumbrous with plate. It is the first time that the house has been arranged for occupation since its late changes, and the happy pair are looked for every minute.

Only second to the wedding-morning, in the interest and expectation it engenders among the household, is this evening of the coming home. Mrs. Perch is in the kitchen taking tea; and has made the tour of the establishment, and priced the silks and damasks by the yard, and exhausted every interjection in the dictionary and out of it expressive of admiration and wonder. The upholsterer's foreman, who has left his hat, with a

pocket-handkerchief in it, both smelling strongly of varnish, under a chair in the hall, lurks about the house, gazing upward at the cornices, and downward at the carpets, and occasionally, in a silent transport of enjoyment, taking a rule out of his pocket, and skirmishingly measuring expensive objects, with unutterable feelings. Cook is in high spirits, and says give *her* a place where there's plenty of company (as she'll bet you sixpence there will be now), for she is of a lively disposition, and she always was from a child, and she don't mind who knows it; which sentiment elicits from the breast of Mrs. Perch a responsive murmur of support and approbation. All the house-maid hopes is, happiness for 'em — but marriage is a lottery, and the more she thinks about it, the more she feels the independence and the safety of a single life. Mr. Towlinson is saturnine and grim, and says that's his opinion too, and give him war besides, and down with the French — for this young man has a general impression that every foreigner is a Frenchman, and must be by the laws of nature.

At each new sound of wheels, they all stop, whatever they are saying, and listen; and more than once there is a general starting up and a cry of "Here they are!" But here they are not yet; and cook begins to mourn over the dinner, which has been put back twice, and the upholsterer's foreman still goes lurking about the rooms, undisturbed in his blissful revery!

Florence is ready to receive her father and her new mama. Whether the emotions that are throbbing in her breast originate in pleasure or in pain, she hardly knows. But the fluttering heart sends added color to her cheeks, and brightness to her eyes; and they say down-stairs, drawing their heads together — for they always speak

softly when they speak of her — how beautiful Miss Florence looks to-night, and what a sweet young lady she has grown, poor dear! A pause succeeds; and then cook, feeling as president, that her sentiments are waited for, wonders whether — and there stops. The housemaid wonders too, and so does Mrs. Perch, who has the happy social faculty of always wondering when other people wonder, without being at all particular what she wonders at. Mr. Towlinson, who now descries an opportunity of bringing down the spirits of the ladies to his own level, says wait and see: he wishes some people were well out of this. Cook leads a sigh then, and a murmur of "Ah, it's a strange world, — it is indeed!" and when it has gone round the table, adds persuasively, "but Miss Florence can't well be the worse for any change, Tom." Mr. Towlinson's rejoinder, pregnant with frightful meaning, is, "Oh, can't she though!" and sensible that a mere man can scarcely be more prophetic, or improve upon that, he holds his peace.

Mrs. Skewton, prepared to greet her darling daughter and dear son-in-law with open arms, is appropriately attired for that purpose in a very youthful costume, with short sleeves. At present, however, her ripe charms are blooming in the shade of her own apartments, whence she has not emerged since she took possession of them a few hours ago, and where she is fast growing fretful, on account of the postponement of dinner. The maid who ought to be a skeleton, but is in truth a buxom damsel, is, on the other hand, in a most amiable state; considering her quarterly stipend much safer than heretofore, and foreseeing a great improvement in her board and lodging.

Where are the happy pair, for whom this brave home

is waiting? Do steam, tide, wind, and horses, all abate their speed, to linger on such happiness? Does the swarm of loves and graces hovering about them retard their progress by its numbers? Are there so many flowers in their happy path, that they can scarcely move along, without entanglement in thornless roses and sweetest brier?

They are here at last! The noise of wheels is heard, grows louder, and a carriage drives up to the door! A thundering knock from the obnoxious foreigner anticipates the rush of Mr. Towlinson and party to open it; and Mr. Dombey and his bride alight, and walk in arm and arm.

"My sweetest Edith!" cries an agitated voice upon the stairs. "My dearest Dombey!" and the short sleeves wreath themselves about the happy couple in turn, and embrace them.

Florence had come down to the hall too, but did not advance: reserving her timid welcome until these nearer and dearer transports should subside. But the eyes of Edith sought her out, upon the threshold; and dismissing her sensitive parent with a slight kiss on the cheek, she hurried on to Florence and embraced her.

"How do you do, Florence?" said Mr. Dombey, putting out his hand.

As Florence, trembling, raised it to her lips, she met his glance. The look was cold and distant enough, but it stirred her heart to think that she observed in it something more of interest than he had ever shown before. It even expressed a kind of faint surprise, and not a disagreeable surprise, at sight of her. She dared not raise her eyes to his any more; but she felt that

he looked at her once again, and not less favorably. Oh! what a thrill of joy shot through her, awakened by even this intangible and baseless confirmation of her hope that she would learn to win him, through her new and beautiful mama!

"You will not be long dressing, Mrs. Dombey, I presume?" said Mr. Dombey.

"I shall be ready immediately."

"Let them send up dinner in a quarter of an hour."

With that Mr. Dombey stalked away to his own dressing-room, and Mrs. Dombey went up-stairs to hers. Mrs. Skewton and Florence repaired to the drawing-room, where that excellent mother considered it incumbent on her to shed a few irrepressible tears, supposed to be forced from her by her daughter's felicity; and which she was still drying, very gingerly, with a laced corner of her pocket-handkerchief, when her son-in-law appeared.

"And how, my dearest Dombey, did you find that delightfullest of cities, Paris?" she asked, subduing her emotion.

"It was cold," returned Mr. Dombey.

"Gay as ever," said Mrs. Skewton, "of course."

"Not particularly. I thought it dull," said Mr. Dombey.

"Fie, my dearest Dombey!" archly; "dull!"

"It made that impression upon me, madam," said Mr. Dombey, with grave politeness. "I believe Mrs. Dombey found it dull too. She mentioned once or twice that she thought it so."

"Why, you naughty girl!" cried Mrs. Skewton, rallying her dear child, who now entered, "what dreadfully heretical things have you been saying about Paris?"

Edith raised her eyebrows with an air of weariness; and passing the folding-doors, which were thrown open to display the suite of rooms in their new and handsome garniture, and barely glancing at them as she passed, sat down by Florence.

"My dear Dombey," said Mrs. Skewton, "how charmingly these people have carried out every idea that we hinted. They have made a perfect palace of the house, positively."

"It is handsome," said Mr. Dombey, looking round. "I directed that no expense should be spared; and all that money could do, has been done, I believe."

"And what can it not do, dear Dombey?" observed Cleopatra.

"It is powerful, madam," said Mr. Dombey.

He looked in his solemn way towards his wife, but not a word said she.

"I hope, Mrs. Dombey," addressing her after a moment's silence, with especial distinctness; "that these alterations meet with your approval?"

"They are as handsome as they can be," she returned, with haughty carelessness. "They should be so, of course. And I suppose they are."

An expression of scorn was habitual to the proud face, and seemed inseparable from it; but the contempt with which it received any appeal to admiration, respect, or consideration on the ground of his riches, no matter how slight or ordinary in itself, was a new and different expression, unequalled in intensity by any other of which it was capable. Whether Mr. Dombey, wrapped in his own greatness, was at all aware of this, or no, there had not been wanting opportunities already for his complete enlightenment; and at that moment it might have

been effected by the one glance of the dark eye that lighted on him, after it had rapidly and scornfully surveyed the theme of his self-glorification. He might have read in that one glance that nothing that his wealth could do, though it were increased ten thousand fold, could win him for its own sake, one look of softened recognition from the defiant woman, linked to him, but arrayed with her whole soul against him. He might have read in that one glance that even for its sordid and mercenary influence upon herself, she spurned it, while she claimed its utmost power as her right, her bargain — as the base and worthless recompense for which she had become his wife. He might have read in it that, ever baring her own head for the lightning of her own contempt and pride to strike, the most innocent allusion to the power of his riches degraded her anew, sunk her deeper in her own respect, and made the blight and waste within her more complete.

But dinner was announced, and Mr. Dombey led down Cleopatra; Edith and his daughter following. Sweeping past the gold and silver demonstration on the sideboard as if it were heaped-up dirt, and deigning to bestow no look upon the elegancies around her, she took her place at his board for the first time, and sat, like a statue, at the feast.

Mr. Dombey, being a good deal in the statue way himself, was well enough pleased to see his handsome wife immovable and proud and cold. Her deportment being always elegant and graceful, this as a general behavior was agreeable and congenial to him. Presiding, therefore, with his accustomed dignity, and not at all reflecting on his wife by any warmth or hilarity of his own, he performed his share of the honors of the table with

a cool satisfaction; and the installation dinner, though not regarded down-stairs as a great success, or very promising beginning, passed off, above, in a sufficiently polite, genteel, and frosty manner.

Soon after tea, Mrs. Skewton, who affected to be quite overcome and worn out by her emotions of happiness, arising in the contemplation of her dear child united to the man of her heart, but who, there is reason to suppose, found this family party somewhat dull, as she yawned for one hour continually behind her fan, retired to bed. Edith, also, silently withdrew and came back no more. Thus, it happened that Florence, who had been up-stairs to have some conversation with Diogenes, returning to the drawing-room with her little work-basket, found no one there but her father, who was walking to and fro, in dreary magnificence.

"I beg your pardon. Shall I go away, papa?" said Florence faintly, hesitating at the door.

"No," returned Mr. Dombey, looking round over his shoulder; "you can come and go here, Florence, as you please. This is not my private room."

Florence entered, and sat down at a distant little table with her work: finding herself for the first time in her life — for the very first time within her memory from her infancy to that hour — alone with her father, as his companion. She, his natural companion, his only child, who in her lonely life and grief had known the suffering of a breaking heart; who, in her rejected love, had never breathed his name to God at night, but with a tearful blessing, heavier on him than a curse; who had prayed to die young, so she might only die in his arms; who had, all through, repaid the agony of slight and coldness, and dislike, with patient unexacting love,

excusing him, and pleading for him, like his better angel!

She trembled, and her eyes were dim. His figure seemed to grow in height and bulk before her as he paced the room: now it was all blurred and indistinct; now clear again, and plain; and now she seemed to think that this had happened, just the same, a multitude of years ago. She yearned towards him, and yet shrunk from his approach. Unnatural emotion in a child, innocent of wrong! Unnatural the hand that had directed the sharp plough, which furrowed up her gentle nature for the sowing of its seeds!

Bent upon not distressing or offending him by her distress, Florence controlled herself, and sat quietly at her work. After a few more turns across and across the room, he left off pacing it; and withdrawing into a shadowy corner at some distance, where there was an easy-chair, covered his head with a handkerchief, and composed himself to sleep.

It was enough for Florence to sit there, watching him; turning her eyes towards his chair from time to time; watching him with her thoughts, when her face was intent upon her work; and sorrowfully glad to think that he *could* sleep, while she was there, and that he was not made restless by her strange and long-forbidden presence.

What would have been her thoughts if she had known that he was steadily regarding her; that the veil upon his face, by accident or by design, was so adjusted that his sight was free, and that it never wandered from her face an instant. That when she looked towards him, in the obscure dark corner, her speaking eyes, more earnest and pathetic in their voiceless speech than all the orators

of all the world, and impeaching him more nearly in their mute address, met his, and did not know it. That when she bent her head again over her work, he drew his breath more easily, but with the same attention looked upon her still — upon her white brow and her falling hair, and busy hands; and once attracted, seemed to have no power to turn his eyes away!

And what were his thoughts meanwhile? With what emotions did he prolong the attentive gaze covertly directed on his unknown daughter? Was there reproach to him in the quiet figure and the mild eyes? Had he begun to feel her disregarded claims, and did they touch him home at last, and waken him to some sense of his cruel injustice?

There are yielding moments in the lives of the sternest and harshest men, though such men often keep their secret well. The sight of her in her beauty, almost changed into a woman without his knowledge, may have struck out some such moments even in his life of pride. Some passing thought that he had had a happy home within his reach — had had a household spirit bending at his feet — had overlooked it in his stiff-necked sullen arrogance, and wandered away and lost himself, may have engendered them. Some simple eloquence distinctly heard, though only uttered in her eyes, unconscious that he read them, as "By the death-beds I have tended, by the childhood I have suffered, by our meeting in this dreary house at midnight, by the cry wrung from me in the anguish of my heart, oh, father, turn to me and seek a refuge in my love before it is too late!" may have arrested them. Meaner and lower thoughts, as that his dead boy was now superseded by new ties, and he could forgive the having been supplanted in his affection,

may have occasioned them. The mere association of her as an ornament, with all the ornament and pomp about him, may have been sufficient. But as he looked, he softened to her, more and more. As he looked, she became blended with the child he had loved, and he could hardly separate the two. As he looked, he saw her for an instant by a clearer and a brighter light, not bending over that child's pillow as his rival — monstrous thought — but as the spirit of his home, and in the action tending himself no less, as he sat once more with his bowed-down head upon his hand at the foot of the little bed. He felt inclined to speak to her, and call her to him. The words "Florence, come here!" were rising to his lips — but slowly and with difficulty, they were so very strange — when they were checked and stifled by a footstep on the stair.

It was his wife's. She had exchanged her dinner-dress for a loose robe, and unbound her hair, which fell freely about her neck. But this was not the change in her that startled him.

"Florence, dear," she said, "I have been looking for you everywhere."

As she sat down by the side of Florence, she stooped and kissed her hand. He hardly knew his wife. She was so changed. It was not merely that her smile was new to him — though that he had never seen; but her manner, the tone of her voice, the light of her eyes, the interest, and confidence, and winning wish to please, expressed in all — this was not Edith.

"Softly, dear mama. Papa is asleep."

It was Edith now. She looked towards the corner where he was, and he knew that face and manner very well.

"I scarcely thought you could be here, Florence."

Again, how altered and how softened, in an instant!

"I left here early," pursued Edith, "purposely to sit up-stairs and talk with you. But, going to your room, I found my bird was flown, and I have been waiting there ever since, expecting its return."

If it had been a bird, indeed, she could not have taken it more tenderly and gently to her breast, than she did Florence.

"Come, dear!"

"Papa will not expect to find me, I suppose, when he wakes," hesitated Florence.

"Do you think he will, Florence?" said Edith, looking full upon her.

Florence drooped her head, and rose, and put up her work-basket. Edith drew her hand through her arm, and they went out of the room like sisters. Her very step was different and new to him, Mr. Dombey thought, as his eyes followed her to the door.

He sat in his shadowy corner so long, that the church clocks struck the hour three times before he moved that night. All that while his face was still intent upon the spot where Florence had been seated. The room grew darker, as the candles waned and went out; but a darkness gathered on his face, exceeding any that the night could cast, and rested there.

Florence and Edith, seated before the fire in the remote room where little Paul had died, talked together for a long time. Diogenes, who was of the party, had at first objected to the admission of Edith, and, even in deference to his mistress's wish, had only permitted it under growling protest. But, emerging by little and little from the ante-room, whither he had retired in

dudgeon, he soon appeared to comprehend, that with the most amiable intentions he had made one of those mistakes which will occasionally arise in the best-regulated dogs' minds; as a friendly apology for which he stuck himself up on end between the two, in a very hot place in front of the fire, and sat panting at it, with his tongue out, and a most imbecile expression of countenance, listening to the conversation.

It turned, at first, on Florence's books and favorite pursuits, and on the manner in which she had beguiled the interval since the marriage. The last theme opened up to her a subject which lay very near her heart, and she said, with the tears starting to her eyes:

"Oh, mama! I have had a great sorrow since that day."

"You a great sorrow, Florence!"

"Yes. Poor Walter is drowned."

Florence spread her hands before her face, and wept with all her heart. Many as were the secret tears which Walter's fate had cost her, they flowed yet, when she thought or spoke of him.

"But tell me, dear," said Edith, soothing her. "Who was Walter? What was he to you?"

"He was my brother, mama. After dear Paul died, we said we would be brother and sister. I had known him a long time — from a little child. He knew Paul, who liked him very much; Paul said, almost at the last, 'Take care of Walter, dear papa! I was fond of him!' Walter had been brought in to see him, and was there then — in this room."

"And *did* he take care of Walter?" inquired Edith, sternly.

"Papa? He appointed him to go abroad. He was

drowned in shipwreck on his voyage," said Florence, sobbing.

"Does he know that he is dead?" asked Edith.

"I cannot tell, mama. I have no means of knowing. Dear mama!" cried Florence, clinging to her as for help, and hiding her face upon her bosom, "I know that you have seen"—

"Stay! Stop, Florence," Edith turned so pale, and spoke so earnestly, that Florence did not need her restraining hand upon her lips. "Tell me all about Walter first; let me understand this history all through."

Florence related it, and everything belonging to it, even down to the friendship of Mr. Toots, of whom she could hardly speak in her distress without a tearful smile, although she was deeply grateful to him. When she had concluded her account, to the whole of which Edith, holding her hand, listened with close attention, and when a silence had succeeded, Edith said:

"What is it that you know I have seen, Florence?"

"That I am not," said Florence, with the same mute appeal, and the same quick concealment of her face as before, "that I am not a favorite child, mama. I never have been. I have never known how to be. I have missed the way, and had no one to show it to me. Oh, let me learn from you, how to become dearer to papa. Teach me! you, who can so well!" and clinging closer to her, with some broken fervent words of gratitude and endearment, Florence, relieved of her sad secret, wept long, but not as painfully as of yore, within the encircling arms of her new mother.

Pale, even to her lips, and with a face that strove for composure until its proud beauty was as fixed as death, Edith looked down upon the weeping girl, and once

kissed her. Then gradually disengaging herself, and putting Florence away, she said, stately and quiet, as a marble image, and in a voice that deepened as she spoke, but had no other token of emotion in it:

"Florence, you do not know me! Heaven forbid that you should learn from me!"

"Not learn from you?" repeated Florence, in surprise.

"That I should teach you how to love, or be loved, Heaven forbid!" said Edith. "If you could teach me, that were better; but it is too late. You are dear to me, Florence. I did not think that anything could ever be so dear to me, as you are in this little time."

She saw that Florence would have spoken here, so checked her with her hand, and went on.

"I will be your true friend always. I will cherish you as much, if not as well as any one in this world could. You may trust in me — I know it and I say it, dear, — with the whole confidence even of your pure heart. There are hosts of women whom he might have married, better and truer in all other respects than I am, Florence; but there is not one who could come here, his wife, whose heart could beat with greater truth to you than mine does."

"I know it, dear mama!" cried Florence. "From that first most happy day I have known it."

"Most happy day!" Edith seemed to repeat the words involuntarily, and went on. "Though the merit is not mine, for I thought little of you until I saw you, let the undeserved reward be mine in your trust and love. And in this — in this, Florence; on the first night of my taking up my abode here; I am led on as it is best I should be, to say it for the first and last time."

Florence, without knowing why, felt almost afraid to hear her proceed, but kept her eyes riveted on the beautiful face so fixed upon her own.

"Never seek to find in me," said Edith, laying her hand upon her breast, "what is not here. Never if you can help it, Florence, fall off from me because it is *not* here. Little by little you will know me better, and the time will come when you will know me, as I know myself. Then, be as lenient to me as you can, and do not turn to bitterness the only sweet remembrance I shall have."

The tears that were visible in her eyes as she kept them fixed on Florence, showed that the composed face was but as a handsome mask; but she preserved it, and continued:

"I *have* seen what you say, and know how true it is. But believe me — you will soon, if you cannot now — there is no one on this earth less qualified to set it right or help you, Florence, than I. Never ask me why, or speak to me about it or of my husband, more. There should be, so far, a division, and a silence between us two, like the grave itself."

She sat for some time silent; Florence scarcely venturing to breathe meanwhile, as dim and imperfect shadows of the truth, and all its daily consequences, chased each other through her terrified, yet incredulous imagination. Almost as soon as she had ceased to speak, Edith's face began to subside from its set composure to that quieter and more relenting aspect, which it usually wore when she and Florence were alone together. She shaded it, after this change, with her hands; and when she arose, and with an affectionate embrace bade Florence good-night, went quickly, and without looking round.

But when Florence was in bed, and the room was dark except for the glow of the fire, Edith returned, and saying that she could not sleep, and that her dressing-room was lonely, drew a chair upon the hearth, and watched the embers as they died away. Florence watched them too from her bed, until they, and the noble figure before them, crowned with its flowing hair, and in its thoughtful eyes reflecting back their light, became confused and indistinct, and finally were lost in slumber.

In her sleep, however, Florence could not lose an undefined impression of what had so recently passed. It formed the subject of her dreams, and haunted her; now in one shape, now in another; but always oppressively; and with a sense of fear. She dreamed of seeking her father in wildernesses, of following his track up fearful heights, and down into deep mines and caverns; of being charged with something that would release him from extraordinary suffering — she knew not what, or why — yet never being able to attain the goal and set him free. Then she saw him dead, upon that very bed, and in that very room, and knew that he had never loved her to the last, and fell upon his cold breast, passionately weeping. Then a prospect opened, and a river flowed, and a plaintive voice she knew, cried, "It is running on, Floy! It has never stopped! You are moving with it!" And she saw him at a distance stretching out his arms towards her, while a figure such as Walter's used to be, stood near him, awfully serene and still. In every vision, Edith came and went, sometimes to her joy, sometimes to her sorrow, until they were alone upon the brink of a dark grave, and Edith pointing down, she looked and saw — what! — another Edith lying at the bottom.

In the terror of this dream, she cried out, and awoke she thought. A soft voice seemed to whisper in her ear, "Florence, dear Florence, it is nothing but a dream!" and stretching out her arms, she returned the caress of her new mama, who then went out at the door in the light of the gray morning. In a moment, Florence sat up wondering whether this had really taken place or not; but she was only certain that it was gray morning indeed, and that the blackened ashes of the fire were on the hearth, and that she was alone.

So passed the night on which the happy pair came home.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HOUSE-WARMING.

Many succeeding days passed in like manner; except that there were numerous visits received and paid, and that Mrs. Skewton held little levees in her own apartments, at which Major Bagstock was a frequent attendant, and that Florence encountered no second look from her father, although she saw him every day. Nor had she much communication in words, with her new mama, who was imperious and proud to all the house but her — Florence could not but observe that — and who, although she always sent for her or went to her when she came home from visiting, and would always go into her room at night, before retiring to rest, however late the hour, and never lost an opportunity of being with her, was often her silent and thoughtful companion for a long time together.

Florence, who had hoped for so much from this marriage, could not help sometimes comparing the bright house with the faded dreary place out of which it had arisen, and wondering when, in any shape, it would begin to be a home; for that it was no home then, for any one, though everything went on luxuriously and regularly, she had always a secret misgiving. Many an hour of sorrowful reflection by day and night, and many a tear of blighted hope, Florence bestowed upon the as-

surance her new mama had given her so strongly, that there was no one on the earth more powerless than herself to teach her how to win her father's heart. And soon Florence began to think — resolved to think would be the truer phrase — that as no one knew so well, how hopeless of being subdued or changed her father's coldness to her was, so she had given her this warning, and forbidden the subject in very compassion. Unselfish here, as in her every act and fancy, Florence preferred to bear the pain of this new wound, rather than encourage any faint foreshadowings of the truth as it concerned her father; tender of him, even in her wandering thoughts. As for his home, she hoped it would become a better one, when its state of novelty and transition should be over: and for herself, thought little, and lamented less.

If none of the new family were particularly at home in private, it was resolved that Mrs. Dombey at least should be at home in public, without delay. A series of entertainments in celebration of the late nuptials, and in cultivation of society, were arranged chiefly by Mr. Dombey and Mrs. Skewton; and it was settled that the festive proceedings should commence by Mrs. Dombey's being at home upon a certain evening, and by Mr. and Mrs. Dombey's requesting the honor of the company of a great many incongruous people to dinner on the same day.

Accordingly Mr. Dombey produced a list of sundry eastern magnates who were to be bidden to this feast on his behalf; to which Mrs. Skewton, acting for her dearest child, who was haughtily careless on the subject, subjoined a western list, comprising Cousin Feenix, not yet returned to Baden Baden, greatly to the detri-

ment of his personal estate; and a variety of moths of various degrees and ages, who had, at various times, fluttered round the light of her fair daughter, or herself, without any lasting injury to their wings. Florence was enrolled as a member of the dinner-party, by Edith's command — elicited by a moment's doubt and hesitation on the part of Mrs. Skewton; and Florence, with a wondering heart, and with a quick instinctive sense of everything that grated on her father in the least, took her silent share in the proceedings of the day.

The proceedings commenced by Mr. Dombey, in a cravat of extraordinary height and stiffness, walking restlessly about the drawing-room until the hour appointed for dinner; punctual to which, an East India Director, of immense wealth, in a waistcoat apparently constructed in serviceable deal by some plain carpenter, but really engendered in the tailor's art, and composed of the material called nankeen, arrived, and was received by Mr. Dombey alone. The next stage of the proceedings was Mr. Dombey sending his compliments to Mrs. Dombey, with a correct statement of the time; and the next, the East India Director's falling prostrate, in a conversational point of view, and as Mr. Dombey was not the man to pick him up, staring at the fire until rescue appeared in the person of Mrs. Skewton; whom the Director, as a pleasant start in life for the evening, mistook for Mrs. Dombey, and greeted with enthusiasm.

The next arrival was a Bank Director, reputed to be able to buy up anything — human Nature generally, if he should take it in his head to influence the money market in that direction — but who was a wonderfully modest-spoken man, almost boastfully so, and mentioned

his "little place" at Kingston-upon-Thames, and its just being barely equal to giving Dombey a bed and a chop, if he would come and visit it. Ladies, he said, it was not for a man who lived in his quiet way to take upon himself to invite — but if Mrs. Skewton and her daughter, Mrs. Dombey, should ever find themselves in that direction, and would do him the honor to look at a little bit of a shrubbery they would find there, and a poor little flower-bed or so, and a humble apology for a pinery, and two or three little attempts of that sort without any pretension, they would distinguish him very much. Carrying out his character, this gentleman was very plainly dressed, in a wisp of cambric for a neck-cloth, big shoes, a coat that was too loose for him, and a pair of trousers that were too spare; and mention being made of the Opera by Mrs. Skewton, he said he very seldom went there, for he couldn't afford it. It seemed greatly to delight and exhilarate him to say so; and he beamed on his audience afterwards, with his hands in his pockets, and excessive satisfaction twinkling in his eyes.

Now Mrs. Dombey appeared, beautiful and proud, and as disdainful and defiant of them all as if the bridal wreath upon her head had been a garland of steel spikes put on to force concession from her which she would die sooner than yield. With her was Florence. When they entered together, the shadow of the night of the return again darkened Mr. Dombey's face. But unobserved: for Florence did not venture to raise her eyes to his, and Edith's indifference was too supreme to take the least heed of him.

The arrivals quickly became numerous. More directors, chairmen of public companies, elderly ladies carrying burdens on their heads for full dress, Cousin Feenix,

Major Bagstock, friends of Mrs. Skewton, with the same bright bloom on their complexion, and very precious necklaces on very withered necks. Among these, a young lady of sixty-five, remarkably coolly dressed as to her back and shoulders, who spoke with an engaging lisp, and whose eyelids wouldn't keep up well, without a great deal of trouble on her part, and whose manners had that indefinable charm which so frequently attaches to the giddiness of youth. As the greater part of Mr. Dombey's list were disposed to be taciturn, and the greater part of Mrs. Dombey's list were disposed to be talkative, and there was no sympathy between them, Mrs. Dombey's list, by magnetic agreement, entered into a bond of union against Mr. Dombey's list, who, wandering about the rooms in a desolate manner, or seeking refuge in corners, entangled themselves with company coming in, and became barricaded behind sofas, and had doors opened smartly from without against their heads, and underwent every sort of discomfiture.

When dinner was announced, Mr. Dombey took down an old lady like a crimson velvet pincushion stuffed with bank-notes, who might have been the identical old lady of Threadneedle-street, she was so rich, and looked so unaccommodating; Cousin Feenix took down Mrs. Dombey; Major Bagstock took down Mrs. Skewton; the young thing with the shoulders was bestowed, as an extinguisher, upon the East India Director; and the remaining ladies were left on view in the drawing-room by the remaining gentlemen, until a forlorn hope volunteered to conduct them down-stairs, and those brave spirits with their captives blocked up the dining-room door, shutting out seven mild men in the stony-hearted hall. When all the rest were got in and were seated,

one of these mild men still appeared, in smiling confusion, totally destitute, and unprovided for, and, escorted by the butler, made the complete circuit of the table twice before his chair could be found, which it finally was, on Mrs. Dombey's left hand; after which the mild man never held up his head again.

Now, the spacious dining-room, with the company seated round the glittering table, busy with their glittering spoons, and knives and forks, and plates, might have been taken for a grown-up exposition of Tom Tiddler's ground, where children pick up gold and silver. Mr. Dombey, as Tiddler, looked his character to admiration; and the long plateau of precious metal frosted, separating him from Mrs. Dombey, whereon frosted Cupids offered scentless flowers to each of them, was allegorical to see.

Cousin Feenix was in great force, and looked astonishingly young. But he was sometimes thoughtless in his good humor — his memory occasionally wandering like his legs — and on this occasion caused the company to shudder. It happened thus. The young lady with the back, who regarded Cousin Feenix with sentiments of tenderness, had entrapped the East India Director into leading her to the chair next him: in return for which good office she immediately abandoned the Director who, being shaded on the other side by a gloomy black velvet hat surmounting a bony and speechless female with a fan, yielded to a depression of spirits and withdrew into himself. Cousin Feenix and the young lady were very lively and humorous, and the young lady laughed so much at something Cousin Feenix related to her, that Major Bagstock begged leave to inquire on behalf of Mrs. Skewton (they were sitting opposite, a

little lower down), whether that might not be considered public property.

"Why, upon my life," said Cousin Feenix, "there's nothing in it; it really is not worth repeating; in point of fact, it's merely an anecdote of Jack Adams. I dare say my friend Dombey;" for the general attention was concentrated on Cousin Feenix; "may remember Jack Adams, Jack Adams, not Joe; that was his brother. Jack — little Jack — man with a cast in his eye, and a slight impediment in his speech — man who sat for somebody's borough. We used to call him in my parliamentary time W. P. Adams, in consequence of his being Warming Pan for a young fellow who was in his minority. Perhaps my friend Dombey may have known the man?"

Mr. Dombey, who was as likely to have known Guy Fawkes, replied in the negative. But one of the seven mild men unexpectedly leaped into distinction, by saying *he* had known him, and adding, — "always wore Hessian boots!"

"Exactly," said Cousin Feenix, bending forward to see the mild man, and smile encouragement at him down the table. "That was Jack. Joe wore" —

"Tops!" cried the mild man, rising in public estimation every instant.

"*Of* course," said Cousin Feenix, "you were intimate with 'em?"

"I knew them both," said the mild man. With whom Mr. Dombey immediately took wine.

"Devilish good fellow, Jack?" said Cousin Feenix, again bending forward, and smiling.

"Excellent," returned the mild man, becoming bold on his success. "One of the best fellows I ever knew."

"No doubt you have heard the story?" said Cousin Feenix.

"I shall know," replied the bold mild man, "when I have heard your Ludship tell it." With that, he leaned back in his chair and smiled at the ceiling, as knowing it by heart, and being already tickled.

"In point of fact, it's nothing of a story in itself," said Cousin Feenix, addressing the table with a smile, and a gay shake of his head, "and not worth a word of preface. But it's illustrative of the neatness of Jack's humor. The fact is, that Jack was invited down to a marriage — which I think took place in Barkshire?"

"Shropshire," said the bold mild man, finding himself appealed to.

"Was it? well! In point of fact it might have been in any shire," said Cousin Feenix. "So, my friend being invited down to this marriage in Anyshire," with a pleasant sense of the readiness of this joke, "goes. Just as some of us having had the honor of being invited to the marriage of my lovely and accomplished relative with my friend Dombey, didn't require to be asked twice, and were devilish glad to be present on so interesting an occasion. — Goes — Jack goes. Now, this marriage was, in point of fact, the marriage of an uncommonly fine girl with a man for whom she didn't care a button, but whom she accepted on account of his property, which was immense. When Jack returned to town, after the nuptials, a man he knew, meeting him in the lobby of the House of Commons, says, 'Well, Jack, how are the ill-matched couple?' 'Ill-matched,' says Jack. 'Not at all. It's a perfectly fair and equal transaction. *She* is regularly bought, and you may take your oath *he* is as regularly sold!'"

In his full enjoyment of this culminating point of his story the shudder, which had gone all round the table like an electric spark, struck Cousin Feenix, and he stopped. Not a smile occasioned by the only general topic of conversation broached that day, appeared on any face. A profound silence ensued; and the wretched mild man, who had been as innocent of any real foreknowledge of the story as the child unborn, had the exquisite misery of reading in every eye that he was regarded as the prime mover of the mischief.

Mr. Dombey's face was not a changeful one, and being cast in its mould of state that day, showed little other apprehension of the story, if any, than that which he expressed when he said solemnly, amidst the silence, that it was "Very good." There was a rapid glance from Edith towards Florence, but otherwise she remained, externally, impassive and unconscious.

Through the various stages of rich meats and wines, continual gold and silver, dainties of earth, air, fire, and water, heaped-up fruits, and that unnecessary article in Mr. Dombey's banquets — ice — the dinner slowly made its way; the later stages being achieved to the sonorous music of incessant double knocks, announcing the arrival of visitors, whose portion of the feast was limited to the smell thereof. When Mrs. Dombey rose, it was a sight to see her lord, with stiff throat, and erect head, hold the door open for the withdrawal of the ladies; and to see how she swept past him with his daughter on her arm.

Mr. Dombey was a grave sight, behind the decanters, in a state of dignity; and the East India Director was a forlorn sight near the unoccupied end of the table, in a state of solitude; and the major was a military sight,

relating stories of the Duke of York to six of the seven mild men (the ambitious one was utterly quenched); and the Bank Director was a lowly sight, making a plan of his little attempt at a pinery, with dessert-knives, for a group of admirers; and Cousin Feenix was a thoughtful sight, as he smoothed his long wristbands and stealthily adjusted his wig. But all these sights were of short duration, being speedily broken up by coffee, and the desertion of the room.

There was a throng in the state-rooms up-stairs, increasing every minute; but still Mr. Dombey's list of visitors appeared to have some native impossibility of amalgamation with Mrs. Dombey's list, and no one could have doubted which was which. The single exception to this rule perhaps was Mr. Carker, who now smiled among the company, and who, as he stood in the circle that was gathered about Mrs. Dombey — watchful of her, of them, his chief, Cleopatra, and the major, Florence, and everything around — appeared at ease with both divisions of guests, and not marked as exclusively belonging to either.

Florence had a dread of him, which made his presence in the room a nightmare to her. She could not avoid the recollection of it, for her eyes were drawn towards him every now and then, by an attraction of dislike and distrust that she could not resist. Yet her thoughts were busy with other things; for as she sat apart — not unadmired or unsought, but in the gentleness of her quiet spirit — she felt how little part her father had in what was going on, and saw, with pain, how ill at ease he seemed to be, and how little regarded he was as he lingered about near the door, for those visitors whom he wished to distinguish with particular attention, and took them

up to introduce them to his wife, who received them with proud coldness, but showed no interest or wish to please, and never, after the bare ceremony of reception, in consultation of his wishes, or in welcome of his friends, opened her lips. It was not the less perplexing or painful to Florence, that she who acted thus, treated her so kindly, and with such loving consideration, that it almost seemed an ungrateful return on her part even to know of what was passing before her eyes.

Happy Florence would have been, might she have ventured to bear her father company, by so much as a look; and happy Florence was, in little suspecting the main cause of his uneasiness. But afraid of seeming to know that he was placed at any disadvantage, lest he should be resentful of that knowledge; and divided between her impulse towards him, and her grateful affection for Edith; she scarcely dared to raise her eyes towards either. Anxious and unhappy for them both, the thought stole on her through the crowd, that it might have been better for them if this noise of tongues and tread of feet had never come there, — if the old dulness and decay had never been replaced by novelty and splendor, — if the neglected child had found no friend in Edith, but had lived her solitary life, unpitied and forgotten.

Mrs. Chick had some such thoughts too, but they were not so quietly developed in her mind. This good matron had been outraged in the first instance by not receiving an invitation to dinner. That blow partially recovered, she had gone to a vast expense to make such a figure before Mrs. Dombey at home, as should dazzle the senses of that lady, and heap mortification, mountains high, on the head of Mrs. Skewton.

"But I am made," said Mrs. Chick to Mr. Chick,

"of no more account than Florence! Who takes the smallest notice of me? No one!"

"No one, my dear," assented Mr. Chick, who was seated by the side of Mrs. Chick against the wall, and could console himself, even there, by softly whistling.

"Does it at all appear as if I was wanted here?" exclaimed Mrs. Chick, with flashing eyes.

"No, my dear, I don't think it does," said Mr. Chick.

"Paul's mad!" said Mrs. Chick.

Mr. Chick whistled.

"Unless you are a monster, which I sometimes think you are," said Mrs. Chick with candor, "don't sit there humming tunes. How any one with the most distant feelings of a man, can see that mother-in-law of Paul's, dressed as she is, going on like that, with Major Bagstock, for whom, among other precious things, we are indebted to your Lucretia Tox" —

"*My* Lucretia Tox, my dear!" said Mr. Chick astounded.

"Yes," retorted Mrs. Chick, with great severity, "*your* Lucretia Tox — I say how anybody can see that mother-in-law of Paul's, and that haughty wife of Paul's, and these indecent old frights with their backs and shoulders, and in short this at home generally, and hum," — on which word Mrs. Chick laid a scornful emphasis that made Mr. Chick start, "is, I thank Heaven, a mystery to me!"

Mr. Chick screwed his mouth into a form irreconcilable with humming or whistling, and looked very contemplative.

"But I hope I know what is due to myself," said Mrs. Chick, swelling with indignation, "though Paul has forgotten what is due to me. I am not going to sit here,

a member of this family, to be taken no notice of. I am not the dirt under Mrs. Dombey's feet, yet — not quite yet," said Mrs. Chick, as if she expected to become so, about the day after to-morrow. "And I shall go. I will not say (whatever I may think) that this affair has been got up solely to degrade and insult me. I shall merely go. I shall not be missed!"

Mrs. Chick rose erect with these words, and took the arm of Mr. Chick, who escorted her from the room, after half an hour's shady sojourn there. And it is due to her penetration to observe that she certainly was not missed at all.

But she was not the only indignant guest; for Mr. Dombey's list (still constantly in difficulties) were, as a body, indignant with Mrs. Dombey's list, for looking at them through eye-glasses, and audibly wondering who all those people were; while Mrs. Dombey's list complained of weariness, and the young thing with the shoulders, deprived of the attentions of that gay youth Cousin Feenix (who went away from the dinner-table), confidentially alleged to thirty or forty friends that she was bored to death. All the old ladies with the burdens on their heads, had greater or less cause of complaint against Mrs. Dombey; and the directors and chairmen coincided in thinking that if Dombey must marry, he had better have married somebody nearer his own age, not quite so handsome, and a little better off. The general opinion among this class of gentlemen was, that it was a weak thing in Dombey, and he'd live to repent it. Hardly anybody there, except the mild men, stayed, or went away, without considering himself or herself neglected and aggrieved by Mr. Dombey or Mrs. Dombey; and the speechless female in the black velvet hat

was found to have been stricken mute, because the lady in the crimson velvet had been handed down before her. The nature even of the mild men got corrupted, either from their curdling it with too much lemonade, or from the general inoculation that prevailed; and they made sarcastic jokes to one another, and whispered disparagement on stairs and in by-places. The general dissatisfaction and discomfort so diffused itself, that the assembled footmen in the hall were as well acquainted with it as the company above. Nay, the very linkmen outside got hold of it, and compared the party to a funeral out of mourning, with none of the company remembered in the will.

At last, the guests were all gone, and the linkmen too; and the street, crowded so long with carriages, was clear; and the dying lights showed no one in the rooms, but Mr. Dombey and Mr. Carker, who were talking together apart, and Mrs. Dombey and her mother: the former seated on an ottoman; the latter reclining in the Cleopatra attitude, awaiting the arrival of her maid. Mr. Dombey having finished his communication to Carker, the latter advanced obsequiously to take leave.

"I trust," he said, "that the fatigues of this delightful evening will not inconvenience Mrs. Dombey to-morrow."

"Mrs. Dombey," said Mr. Dombey, advancing, "has sufficiently spared herself fatigue, to relieve you from any anxiety of that kind. I regret to say, Mrs. Dombey, that I could have wished you had fatigued yourself a little more on this occasion."

She looked at him with a supercilious glance, that it seemed not worth her while to protract, and turned away her eyes without speaking.

"I am sorry, madam," said Mr. Dombey, "that you should not have thought it your duty" —

She looked at him again.

"Your duty, madam," pursued Mr. Dombey, "to have received my friends with a little more deference. Some of those whom you have been pleased to slight to-night in a very marked manner, Mrs. Dombey, confer a distinction upon you, I must tell you, in any visit they pay you."

"Do you know that there is some one here?" she returned, now looking at him steadily.

"No! Carker! I beg that you do not. I insist that you do not," cried Mr. Dombey, stopping that noiseless gentleman in his withdrawal. "Mr. Carker, madam, as you know, possesses my confidence. He is as well acquainted as myself with the subject on which I speak. I beg to tell you, for your information, Mrs. Dombey, that I consider these wealthy and important persons confer a distinction upon *me:*" and Mr. Dombey drew himself up, as having now rendered them of the highest possible importance.

"I ask you," she repeated, bending her disdainful, steady gaze upon him, "do you know that there is some one here, sir?"

"I must entreat," said Mr. Carker, stepping forward, "I must beg, I must demand, to be released. Slight and unimportant as this difference is" —

Mrs. Skewton, who had been intent upon her daughter's face, took him up here.

"My sweetest Edith," she said, "and my dearest Dombey; our excellent friend Mr. Carker, for so I am sure I ought to mention him" —

Mr. Carker murmured, "Too much honor."

— "has used the very words that were in my mind, and that I have been dying, these ages, for an opportunity of introducing. Slight and unimportant! My sweetest Edith, and my dearest Dombey, do we not know that any difference between you two — No, Flowers; not now."

Flowers was the maid, who, finding gentlemen present, retreated with precipitation.

"That any difference between you two," resumed Mrs. Skewton, "with the heart you possess in common, and the excessively charming bond of feeling that there is between you, *must* be slight and unimportant? What words could better define the fact? None. Therefore I am glad to take this slight occasion — this trifling occasion, that is so replete with Nature, and your individual characters, and all that — so truly calculated to bring the tears into a parent's eyes — to say that I attach no importance to them in the least, except as developing these minor elements of Soul; and that, unlike most mamas-in-law (that odious phrase, dear Dombey!) as they have been represented to me to exist in this I fear too artificial world, I never shall attempt to interpose between you, at such a time, and never can much regret, after all, such little flashes of the torch of What's-his-name — not Cupid, but the other delightful creature."

There was a sharpness in the good mother's glance at both her children as she spoke, that may have been expressive of a direct and well-considered purpose hidden between these rambling words. That purpose, providently to detach herself in the beginning from all the clankings of their chain that were to come, and to shelter herself with the fiction of her innocent belief

in their mutual affection, and their adaptation to each other.

"I have pointed out to Mrs. Dombey," said Mr. Dombey, in his most stately manner, "that in her conduct thus early in our married life, to which I object, and which, I request, may be corrected. Carker," with a nod of dismissal, "good-night to you!"

Mr. Carker bowed to the imperious form of the bride, whose sparkling eye was fixed upon her husband; and stopping at Cleopatra's couch on his way out, raised to his lips the hand she graciously extended to him, in lowly and admiring homage.

If his handsome wife had reproached him, or even changed countenance, or broken the silence in which she remained, by one word, now that they were alone (for Cleopatra made off with all speed), Mr. Dombey would have been equal to some assertion of his case against her. But the intense, unutterable, withering scorn, with which, after looking upon him, she dropped her eyes as if he were too worthless and indifferent to her to be challenged with a syllable — the ineffable disdain and haughtiness in which she sat before him — the cold inflexible resolve with which her every feature seemed to bear him down, and put him by — he had no resource against; and he left her, with her whole overbearing beauty concentrated on despising him.

Was he coward enough to watch her, an hour afterwards, on the old well staircase, where he had once seen Florence in the moonlight, toiling up with Paul? Or was he in the dark by accident, when, looking up, he saw her coming, with a light, from the room where Florence lay, and marked again the face so changed, which *he* could not subdue.

But it could never alter as his own did. It never, in its utmost pride and passion, knew the shadow that had fallen on his, in the dark corner, on the night of the return; and often since; and which deepened on it now as he looked up.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

MORE WARNINGS THAN ONE.

Florence, Edith, and Mrs. Skewton were together next day, and the carriage was waiting at the door to take them out. For Cleopatra had her galley again now, and Withers, no longer the wan, stood upright in a pigeon-breasted jacket and military trousers, behind her wheel-less chair at dinner-time, and butted no more. The hair of Withers was radiant with pomatum, in these days of down, and he wore kid gloves and smelt of the water of Cologne.

They were assembled in Cleopatra's room. The Serpent of old Nile (not to mention her disrespectfully) was reposing on her sofa, sipping her morning chocolate at three o'clock in the afternoon, and Flowers the maid was fastening on her youthful cuffs and frills, and performing a kind of private coronation ceremony on her, with a peach-colored velvet bonnet; the artificial roses in which nodded to uncommon advantage, as the palsy trifled with them, like a breeze.

"I think I am a little nervous this morning, Flowers," said Mrs. Skewton. "My hand quite shakes."

"You were the life of the party last night, ma'am, you know," returned Flowers, "and you suffer for it to-day, you see."

Edith, who had beckoned Florence to the window, and

was looking out, with her back turned on the toilet of her esteemed mother, suddenly withdrew from it, as if it had lightened.

"My darling child," cried Cleopatra, languidly, "*you* are not nervous? Don't tell me, my dear Edith, that you, so enviably self-possessed, are beginning to be a martyr too, like your unfortunately constituted mother! Withers, some one at the door."

"Card, ma'am," said Withers, taking it towards Mrs. Dombey.

"I am going out," she said, without looking at it.

"My dear love," drawled Mrs. Skewton, "how very odd to send that message without seeing the name! Bring it here, Withers. Dear me, my love; Mr. Carker, too! that very sensible person!"

"I am going out," repeated Edith, in so imperious a tone, that Withers, going to the door, imperiously informed the servant who was waiting, "Mrs. Dombey is going out. Get along with you," and shut it on him.

But the servant came back after a short absence, and whispered to Withers again, who once more, and not very willingly, presented himself before Mrs. Dombey.

"If you please, ma'am, Mr. Carker sends his respectful compliments, and begs you would spare him one minute, if you could — for business, ma'am, if you please."

"Really, my love," said Mrs. Skewton in her mildest manner; for her daughter's face was threatening; "if you would allow me to offer a word, I should recommend" —

"Show him this way," said Edith. As Withers dis-

appeared to execute the command, she added, frowning on her mother, "As he comes at your recommendation, let him come to your room."

"May I — shall I go away?" asked Florence, hurriedly.

Edith nodded yes, but on her way to the door Florence met the visitor coming in. With the same disagreeable mixture of familiarity and forbearance with which he had first addressed her, he addressed her now in his softest manner — hoped she was quite well — needed not to ask, with such looks to anticipate the answer — had scarcely had the honor to know her, last night, she was so greatly changed — and held the door open for her to pass out; with a secret sense of power in her shrinking from him, that all the deference and politeness of his manner could not quite conceal.

He then bowed himself for a moment over Mrs. Skewton's condescending hand, and lastly bowed to Edith. Coldly returning his salute without looking at him, and neither seating herself nor inviting him to be seated, she waited for him to speak.

Entrenched in her pride and power, and with all the obduracy of her spirit summoned about her, still her old conviction that she and her mother had been known by this man in their worst colors, from their first acquaintance; that every degradation she had suffered in her own eyes was as plain to him as to herself; that he read her life as though it were a vile book, and fluttered the leaves before her in slight looks and tones of voice which no one else could detect; weakened and undermined her. Proudly as she opposed herself to him, with her commanding face exacting his humility, her disdainful lip repulsing him, her bosom angry at his in-

trusion, and the dark lashes of her eye sullenly veiling their light, that no ray of it might shine upon him — and submissively as he stood before her, with an entreating injured manner, but with complete submission to her will — she knew, in her own soul, that the cases were reversed, and that the triumph and superiority were his, and that he knew it full well.

"I have presumed," said Mr. Carker, "to solicit an interview, and I have ventured to describe it as being one of business, because" —

"Perhaps you are charged by Mr. Dombey with some message of reproof," said Edith. "You possess Mr. Dombey's confidence in such an unusual degree, sir, that you would scarcely surprise me if that were your business."

"I have no message to the lady who sheds a lustre upon his name," said Mr. Carker. "But I entreat that lady, on my own behalf, to be just to a very humble claimant for justice at her hands — a mere dependant of Mr. Dombey's — which is a position of humility; and to reflect upon my perfect helplessness last night, and the impossibility of my avoiding the share that was forced upon me in a very painful occasion."

"My dearest Edith," hinted Cleopatra in a low voice, as she held her eye-glass aside, "really very charming of Mr. What's-his-name. And full of heart!"

"For I do," said Mr. Carker, appealing to Mrs. Skewton with a look of grateful deference, — "I do venture to call it a painful occasion, though merely because it was so to me, who had the misfortune to be present. So slight a difference, as between the principals — between those who love each other with disinterested devotion, and would make any sacrifice of self, in such

a cause — is nothing. As Mrs. Skewton herself expressed, with so much truth and feeling last night, it is nothing."

Edith could not look at him, but she said after a few moments,

"And your business, sir" —

"Edith, my pet," said Mrs. Skewton, "all this time Mr. Carker is standing! My dear Mr. Carker, take a seat, I beg."

He offered no reply to the mother, but fixed his eyes on the proud daughter, as though he would only be bidden by her, and was resolved to be bidden by her. Edith, in spite of herself, sat down, and slightly motioned with her hand to him to be seated too. No action could be colder, haughtier, more insolent in its air of supremacy and disrespect, but she had struggled against even that concession ineffectually, and it was wrested from her. That was enough! Mr. Carker sat down.

"May I be allowed, madam," said Carker, turning his white teeth on Mrs. Skewton like a light — "a lady of your excellent sense and quick feeling will give me credit, for good reason, I am sure — to address what I have to say, to Mrs. Dombey, and to leave her to impart it to you who are her best and dearest friend — next to Mr. Dombey?"

Mrs. Skewton would have retired, but Edith stopped her. Edith would have stopped him too, and indignantly ordered him to speak openly or not at all, but that he said, in a low voice — "Miss Florence — the young lady who has just left the room" —

Edith suffered him to proceed. She looked at him now. As he bent forward, to be nearer, with the utmost

show of delicacy and respect, and with his teeth persuasively arrayed, in a self-depreciating smile, she felt as if she could have struck him dead.

"Miss Florence's position," he began, "has been an unfortunate one. I have a difficulty in alluding to it to you, whose attachment to her father is naturally watchful and jealous of every word that applies to him." Always distinct and soft in speech, no language could describe the extent of his distinctness and softness, when he said these words, or came to any others of a similar import. "But, as one who is devoted to Mr. Dombey in his different way, and whose life is passed in admiration of Mr. Dombey's character, may I say, without offence to your tenderness as a wife, that Miss Florence has unhappily been neglected — by her father. May I say by her father?"

Edith replied, "I know it."

"You know it!" said Mr. Carker, with a great appearance of relief. "It removes a mountain from my breast. May I hope you know how the neglect originated; in what an amiable phase of Mr. Dombey's pride — character I mean?"

"You may pass that by, sir," she returned, "and come the sooner to the end of what you have to say."

"Indeed, I am sensible, madam," replied Carker, — "trust me, I am deeply sensible, that Mr. Dombey can require no justification in anything to you. But, kindly judge of my breast by your own, and you will forgive my interest in him, if, in its excess, it goes at all astray."

What a stab to her proud heart, to sit there, face to face with him, and have him tendering her false oath at the altar again and again for her acceptance, and

pressing it upon her like the dregs of a sickening cup she could not own her loathing of, or turn away from! How shame, remorse, and passion raged within her, when, upright and majestic in her beauty before him, she knew that in her spirit she was down at his feet!

"Miss Florence," said Carker, "left to the care — if one may call it care — of servants and mercenary people, in every way her inferiors, necessarily wanted some guide and compass in her younger days, and, naturally, for want of them, has been indiscreet, and has in some degree forgotten her station. There was some folly about one Walter, a common lad, who is fortunately dead now: and some very undesirable association, I regret to say, with certain coasting sailors, of anything but good repute, and a runaway old bankrupt."

"I have heard the circumstances, sir," said Edith, flashing her disdainful glance upon him, "and I know that you pervert them. You may not know it, I hope so."

"Pardon me," said Mr. Carker, "I believe that nobody knows them so well as I. Your generous and ardent nature, madam — the same nature which is so nobly imperative in vindication of your beloved and honored husband, and which has blessed him as even his merits deserve — I must respect, defer to, bow before. But, as regards the circumstances, which is indeed the business I presumed to solicit your attention to, I can have no doubt, since, in the execution of my trust as Mr. Dombey's confidential — I presume to say — friend, I have fully ascertained them. In my execution of that trust; in my deep concern, which you can so well understand, for everything relating to him, inten-

sified, if you will, (for I fear I labor under your displeasure), by the lower motive of desire to prove my diligence, and make myself the more acceptable; I have long pursued these circumstances by myself and trustworthy instruments, and have innumerable and most minute proofs."

She raised her eyes no higher than his mouth, but she saw the means of mischief vaunted in every tooth it contained.

"Pardon me, madam," he continued, "if, in my perplexity, I presume to take counsel with you, and to consult your pleasure. I think I have observed that you are greatly interested in Miss Florence?"

What was there in her he had not observed, and did not know? Humbled and yet maddened by the thought, in every new presentment of it, however faint, she pressed her teeth upon her quivering lip to force composure on it, and distantly inclined her head in reply.

"This interest, madam — so touching an evidence of everything associated with Mr. Dombey being dear to you — induces me to pause before I make him acquainted with these circumstances, which, as yet, he does not know. It so far shakes me, if I may make the confession, in my allegiance, that on the intimation of the least desire to that effect from you, I would suppress them."

Edith raised her head quickly, and starting back, bent her dark glance upon him. He met it with his blandest and most deferential smile, and went on.

"You say that as I describe them, they are perverted. I fear not — I fear not: but let us assume that they are. The uneasiness I have for some time felt on the subject, arises in this: that the mere circumstance of such association often repeated, on the part of Miss Florence,

however innocently and confidingly, would be conclusive with Mr. Dombey, already predisposed against her, and would lead him to take some step (I know he has occasionally contemplated it) of separation and alienation of her from his home. Madam, bear with me, and remember my intercourse with Mr. Dombey, and my knowledge of him, and my reverence for him, almost from childhood, when I say that if he has a fault, it is a lofty stubbornness, rooted in that noble pride and sense of power which belong to him, and which we must all defer to; which is not assailable like the obstinacy of other characters; and which grows upon itself from day to day, and year to year."

She bent her glance upon him still; but, look as steadfast as she would, her haughty nostrils dilated, and her breath came somewhat deeper, and her lip would slightly curl as he described that in his patron to which they must all bow down. He saw it; and though his expression did not change, she knew he saw it.

"Even so slight an incident as last night's," he said, "if I might refer to it once more, would serve to illustrate my meaning, better than a greater one. Dombey and Son know neither time, nor place, nor season, but bear them all down. But I rejoice in its occurrence, for it has opened the way for me to approach Mrs. Dombey with this subject to-day, even if it has entailed upon me the penalty of her temporary displeasure. Madam, in the midst of my uneasiness and apprehension on this subject, I was summoned by Mr. Dombey to Leamington. There I saw you. There I could not help knowing what relation you would shortly occupy towards him — to his enduring happiness and yours. There I resolved to await the time of your establishment at home

here, and to do as I have now done. I have, at heart, no fear that I shall be wanting in my duty to Mr. Dombey, if I bury what I know in your breast; for where there is but one heart and mind between two persons — as in such a marriage — one almost represents the other. I can acquit my conscience therefore, almost equally, by confidence, on such a theme, in you or him. For the reasons I have mentioned, I would select you. May I aspire to the distinction of believing that my confidence is accepted, and that I am relieved from my responsibility?"

He long remembered the look she gave him — who could see it, and forget it? — and the struggle that ensued within her. At last she said:

"I accept it, sir. You will please to consider this matter at an end, and that it goes no farther."

He bowed low, and rose. She rose too, and he took leave with all humility. But Withers, meeting him on the stairs, stood amazed at the beauty of his teeth, and at his brilliant smile; and as he rode away upon his white-legged horse, the people took him for a dentist, such was the dazzling show he made. The people took *her*, when she rode out in her carriage presently, for a great lady, as happy as she was rich and fine. But they had not seen her, just before, in her own room with no one by; and they had not heard her utterance of the three words, "Oh Florence, Florence!"

Mrs. Skewton, reposing on her sofa, and sipping her chocolate, had heard nothing but the low word business, for which she had a mortal aversion, insomuch that she had long banished it from her vocabulary, and had gone nigh, in a charming manner and with an immense amount of heart, to say nothing of soul, to ruin divers

milliners and others in consequence. Therefore, Mrs. Skewton asked no questions, and showed no curiosity. Indeed, the peach-velvet bonnet gave her sufficient occupation out of doors; for being perched on the back of her head, and the day being rather windy, it was frantic to escape from Mrs. Skewton's company, and would be coaxed into no sort of compromise. When the carriage was closed, and the wind shut out, the palsy played among the artificial roses again like an alms-house full of superannuated zephyrs; and altogether Mrs. Skewton had enough to do, and got on but indifferently.

She got on no better towards night; for when Mrs. Dombey in her dressing-room, had been dressed and waiting for her half an hour, and Mr. Dombey, in the drawing-room, had paraded himself into a state of solemn fretfulness (they were all three going out to dinner), Flowers the maid appeared with a pale face to Mrs. Dombey saying:

"If you please, ma'am, I beg your pardon, but I can't do nothing with missis!"

"What do you mean?" asked Edith.

"Well, ma'am," replied the frightened maid, "I hardly know. She's making faces!"

Edith hurried with her to her mother's room. Cleopatra was arrayed in full dress, with the diamonds, short-sleeves, rouge, curls, teeth, and other juvenility all complete; but Paralysis was not to be deceived, had known her for the object of its errand, and had struck her at her glass, where she lay like a horrible doll that had tumbled down.

They took her to pieces in very shame, and put the little of her that was real on a bed. Doctors were sent for, and soon came. Powerful remedies were resorted

to; opinions given that she would rally from this shock, but would not survive another; and there she lay speechless, and staring at the ceiling, for days: sometimes making inarticulate sounds in answer to such questions as did she know who were present, and the like: sometimes giving no reply either by sign or gesture, or in her unwinking eyes.

At length she began to recover consciousness, and in some degree the power of motion, though not yet of speech. One day the use of her right hand returned; and showing it to her maid who was in attendance on her, and appearing very uneasy in her mind, she made signs for a pencil and some paper. This the maid immediately provided, thinking she was going to make a will, or write some last request; and Mrs. Dombey being from home, the maid awaited the result with solemn feelings.

After much painful scrawling and erasing, and putting in of wrong characters, which seemed to tumble out of the pencil of their own accord, the old woman produced this document:

"Rose-colored curtains."

The maid being perfectly transfixed, and with tolerable reason, Cleopatra amended the manuscript by adding two words more, when it stood thus:

"Rose-colored curtains for doctors."

The maid now perceived remotely that she wished these articles to be provided for the better presentation of her complexion to the faculty; and as those in the house who knew her best, had no doubt of the correctness of this opinion, which she was soon able to establish for herself, the rose-colored curtains were added to her bed, and she mended with increased rapidity from

that hour. She was soon able to sit up, in curls and a laced cap and night-gown, and to have a little artificial bloom dropped into the hollow caverns of her cheeks.

It was a tremendous sight to see this old woman in her finery leering and mincing at Death, and playing off her youthful tricks upon him as if he had been the major; but an alteration in her mind that ensued on the paralytic stroke was fraught with as much matter for reflection, and was quite as ghastly.

Whether the weakening of her intellect made her more cunning and false than before, or whether it confused her between what she had assumed to be and what she really had been, or whether it had awakened any glimmering of remorse, which could neither struggle into light nor get back into total darkness, or whether, in the jumble of her faculties, a combination of these effects had been shaken up, which is perhaps the more likely supposition, the result was this: — That she became hugely exact in respect of Edith's affection and gratitude and attention to her; highly laudatory of herself as a most inestimable parent; and very jealous of having any rival in Edith's regard. Further, in place of remembering that compact made between them for an avoidance of the subject, she constantly alluded to her daughter's marriage as a proof of her being an incomparable mother; and all this, with the weakness and peevishness of such a state, always serving for a sarcastic commentary on her levity and youthfulness.

"Where is Mrs. Dombey?" she would say to her maid.

"Gone out, ma'am."

"Gone out! Does she go out to shun her mama, Flowers?"

"La bless you, no ma'am. Mrs. Dombey has only gone out for a ride with Miss Florence."

"Miss Florence. Who's Miss Florence? Don't tell me about Miss Florence. What's Miss Florence to her, compared to me?"

The opposite display of the diamonds, or the peach-velvet bonnet (she sat in the bonnet to receive visitors, weeks before she could stir out of doors), or the dressing of her up in some gaud or other, usually stopped the tears that began to flow hereabouts; and she would remain in a complacent state until Edith came to see her; when, at a glance of the proud face, she would relapse again.

"Well, I am sure, Edith!" she would cry, shaking her head.

"What is the matter, mother?"

"Matter! I really don't know what *is* the matter. The world is coming to such an artificial and ungrateful state, that I begin to think there's no Heart — or anything of that sort — left in it, positively. Withers is more a child to me than you are. He attends to me much more than my own daughter. I almost wish I didn't look so young — and all that kind of thing — and then perhaps I should be more considered."

"What would you have, mother?"

"Oh, a great deal, Edith," impatiently.

"Is there anything you want that you have not? It is your own fault if there be."

"My own fault!" beginning to whimper. "The parent I have been to you, Edith: making you a companion from your cradle! And when you neglect me, and have no more natural affection for me than if I was a stranger — not a twentieth part of the affection that you

have for Florence — but I am only your mother and should corrupt *her* in a day! — you reproach me with its being my own fault."

"Mother, mother, I reproach you with nothing. Why will you always dwell on this?"

"Isn't it natural that I should dwell on this, when I am all affection and sensitiveness, and am wounded in the cruellest way, whenever you look at me?"

"I do not mean to wound you, mother. Have you no remembrance of what has been said between us? Let the Past rest."

"Yes, rest! And let gratitude to me, rest; and let affection for me, rest; and let *me* rest in my out-of-the-way room, with no society and no attention, while you find new relations to make much of, who have no earthly claim upon you! Good gracious, Edith, do you know what an elegant establishment you are at the head of?"

"Yes. Hush!"

"And that gentlemanly creature, Dombey? do you know that you are married to him, Edith, and that you have a settlement, and a position, and a carriage, and I don't know what?"

"Indeed I know it, mother; well."

"As you would have had with that delightful, good soul — what did they call him? — Granger — if he hadn't died. And who have you to thank for all this, Edith?"

"You, mother; you."

"Then put your arms round my neck, and kiss me; and show me, Edith, that you know there never was a better mama than I have been to you. And don't let me become a perfect fright with teasing and wearing myself at your ingratitude, or when I'm out again in

society, no soul will know me, not even that hateful animal, the major."

But, sometimes, when Edith went nearer to her, and bending down her stately head, put her cold cheek to hers, the mother would draw back as if she were afraid of her, and would fall into a fit of trembling, and cry out that there was a wandering in her wits. And sometimes she would entreat her, with humility, to sit down on the chair beside her bed, and would look at her (as she sat there brooding) with a face that even the rose-colored curtains could not make otherwise than seared and wild.

The rose-colored curtains blushed, in course of time, on Cleopatra's bodily recovery, and on her dress — more juvenile than ever, to repair the ravages of illness — and on the rouge, and on the teeth, and on the curls, and on the diamonds, and the short sleeves, and the whole wardrobe of the doll that had tumbled down before the mirror. They blushed too, now and then, upon an indistinctness in her speech, which she turned off with a girlish giggle, and, on an occasional failing in her memory, that had no rule in it, but came and went fantastically; as if in mockery of her fantastic self.

But they never blushed upon a change in the new manner of her thought and speech towards her daughter. And though that daughter often came within their influence, they never blushed upon her loveliness irradiated by a smile, or softened by the light of filial love, in its stern beauty.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

MISS TOX IMPROVES AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

The forlorn Miss Tox, abandoned by her friend Louisa Chick, and bereft of Mr. Dombey's countenance — for no delicate pair of wedding-cards, united by a silver thread, graced the chimney-glass in Princess's-place, or the harpsichord, or any of those little posts of display which Lucretia reserved for holiday occupation — became depressed in her spirits, and suffered much from melancholy. For a time the Bird Waltz was unheard in Princess's-place, the plants were neglected, and dust collected on the miniature of Miss Tox's ancestor with the powdered head and pigtail.

Miss Tox, however, was not of an age or of a disposition long to abandon herself to unavailing regrets. Only two notes of the harpsichord were dumb from disuse when the Bird Waltz again warbled and trilled in the crooked drawing-room; only one slip of geranium fell a victim to imperfect nursing, before she was gardening at her green baskets again, regularly every morning; the powdered-headed ancestor had not been under a cloud for more than six weeks, when Miss Tox breathed on his benignant visage, and polished him up with a piece of wash-leather.

Still, Miss Tox was lonely, and at a loss. Her attachments, however ludicrously shown, were real and strong;

and she was, as she expressed it, "deeply hurt by the unmerited contumely she had met with from Louisa." But there was no such thing as anger in Miss Tox's composition. If she had ambled on through life, in her soft-spoken way, without any opinions, she had, at least, got so far without any harsh passions. The mere sight of Louisa Chick in the street one day, at a considerable distance, so overpowered her milky nature, that she was fain to seek immediate refuge in a pastry-cook's, and there, in a musty little back-room usually devoted to the consumption of soups, and pervaded by an ox-tail atmosphere, relieve her feelings by weeping plentifully.

Against Mr. Dombey Miss Tox hardly felt that she had any reason of complaint. Her sense of that gentleman's magnificence was such, that once removed from him, she felt as if her distance always had been immeasurable, and as if he had greatly condescended in tolerating her at all. No wife could be too handsome or too stately for him, according to Miss Tox's sincere opinion. It was perfectly natural that in looking for one, he should look high. Miss Tox with tears laid down this proposition, and fully admitted it twenty times a day. She never recalled the lofty manner in which Mr. Dombey had made her subservient to his convenience and caprices, and had graciously permitted her to be one of the nurses of his little son. She only thought, in her own words, "that she had passed a great many happy hours in that house, which she must ever remember with gratification, and that she could never cease to regard Mr. Dombey as one of the most impressive and dignified of men."

Cut off, however, from the implacable Louisa, and

being shy of the major (whom she viewed with some distrust now), Miss Tox found it very irksome to know nothing of what was going on in Mr. Dombey's establishment. And as she really had got into the habit of considering Dombey and Son as the pivot on which the world in general turned, she resolved, rather than be ignorant of intelligence which so strongly interested her, to cultivate her old acquaintance, Mrs. Richards, who she knew, since her last memorable appearance before Mr. Dombey, was in the habit of sometimes holding communication with his servants. Perhaps Miss Tox in seeking out the Toodle family, had the tender motive hidden in her breast of having somebody to whom she could talk about Mr. Dombey, no matter how humble that somebody might be.

At all events, towards the Toodle habitation Miss Tox directed her steps one evening, what time Mr. Toodle, cindery and swart, was refreshing himself with tea, in the bosom of his family. Mr. Toodle had only three stages of existence. He was either taking refreshment in the bosom just mentioned, or he was tearing through the country at from twenty-five to fifty miles an hour, or he was sleeping after his fatigues. He was always in a whirlwind or a calm, and a peaceable contented easy-going man Mr. Toodle was in either state, who seemed to have made over all his own inheritance of fuming and fretting to the engines with which he was connected, which panted, and gasped, and chafed, and wore themselves out in a most unsparing manner, while Mr. Toodle led a mild and equable life.

"Polly, my gal," said Mr. Toodle, with a young Toodle on each knee, and two more making tea for him, and plenty more scattered about — Mr. Toodle was never

out of children, but always kept a good supply on hand — "You a'n't seen our Biler lately, have you?"

"No," replied Polly, "but he's almost certain to look in to-night. It's his right evening, and he's very regular."

"I suppose," said Mr. Toodle, relishing his meal infinitely, "as our Biler is a-doin' now about as well as a boy *can* do, eh, Polly?"

"Oh! he's a-doing beautiful!" responded Polly.

"He a'n't got to be at all secret-like — has he, Polly?" inquired Mr. Toodle.

"No!" said Mrs. Toodle, plumply.

"I'm glad he a'n't got to be at all secret-like, Polly," observed Mr. Toodle in his slow and measured way, and shovelling in his bread and butter with a clasp-knife, as if he were stoking himself, "because that don't look well; do it, Polly?"

"Why, of course it don't, father. How can you ask!"

"You see, my boys and gals," said Mr. Toodle, looking round upon his family, "wotever you're up to in a honest way, it's my opinion as you can't do better than be open. If you find yourselves in cuttings or in tunnels, don't you play no secret games. Keep your whistles going, and let's know where you are."

The rising Toodles set up a shrill murmur, expressive of their resolution to profit by the paternal advice.

"But what makes you say this along of Rob, father?" asked his wife, anxiously.

"Polly, old 'ooman," said Mr. Toodle, "I don't know as I said it partickler along o' Rob, I'm sure. I starts light with Rob only; I comes to a branch; I takes on what I finds there; and a whole train of ideas gets

coupled on to him, afore I knows where I am, or where they comes from. What a Junction a man's thoughts is," said Mr. Toodle, "to-be-sure!"

This profound reflection Mr. Toodle washed down with a pint mug of tea, and proceeded to solidify with a great weight of bread and butter; charging his young daughters meanwhile, to keep plenty of hot water in the pot, as he was uncommon dry, and should take the indefinite quantity of "a sight of mugs," before his thirst was appeased.

In satisfying himself, however, Mr. Toodle was not regardless of the younger branches about him, who, although they had made their own evening repast, were on the look-out for irregular morsels, as possessing a relish. These he distributed now and then to the expectant circle, by holding out great wedges of bread and butter, to be bitten at by the family in lawful succession, and by serving out small doses of tea in like manner with a spoon; which snacks had such a relish in the mouths of these young Toodles, that, after partaking of the same, they performed private dances of ecstasy among themselves, and stood on one leg apiece, and hopped, and indulged in other saltatory tokens of gladness. These vents for their excitement found, they gradually closed about Mr. Toodle again, and eyed him hard as he got through more bread and butter and tea: affecting, however, to have no further expectations of their own in reference to those viands, but to be conversing on foreign subjects, and whispering confidentially.

Mr. Toodle, in the midst of this family group, and setting an awful example to his children in the way of appetite, was conveying the two young Toodles on his knees to Birmingham by special engine, and was con-

templating the rest over a barrier of bread and butter, when Rob the Grinder, in his sou'wester hat and mourning slops, presented himself, and was received with a general rush of brothers and sisters.

"Well, mother!" said Rob, dutifully kissing her; "how are you, mother?"

"There's my boy!" cried Polly, giving him a hug, and a pat on the back. "Secret! Bless you, father, not he!"

This was intended for Mr. Toodle's private edification, but Rob the Grinder, whose withers were not unwrung, caught the words as they were spoken.

"What! father's been a-saying something more again me, has he?" cried the injured innocent. "Oh, what a hard thing it is that when a cove has once gone a little wrong, a cove's own father should be always a-throwing it in his face behind his back! It's enough," cried Rob, resorting to his coat-cuff in anguish of spirit, "to make a cove go and do something out of spite!"

"My poor boy!" cried Polly, "father didn't mean anything."

"If father didn't mean anything," blubbered the injured Grinder, "why did he go and say anything, mother? Nobody thinks half so bad of me as my own father does. What a unnatural thing! I wish somebody'd take and chop my head off. Father wouldn't mind doing it, I believe, and I'd much rather he did that than t'other."

At these desperate words all the young Toodles shrieked; a pathetic effect, which the Grinder improved by ironically adjuring them not to cry for him, for they ought to hate him, they ought, if they was good boys and girls; and this so touched the youngest Toodle but

one, who was easily moved, that it touched him not only in his spirit but in his wind too; making him so purple that Mr. Toodle in consternation carried him out to the water-butt, and would have put him under the tap, but for his being recovered by the sight of that instrument.

Matters having reached this point, Mr. Toodle explained, and the virtuous feelings of his son being thereby calmed, they shook hands, and harmony reigned again.

"Will you do as I do, Biler, my boy?" inquired his father, returning to his tea with new strength.

"No, thank'ee, father. Master and I had tea together."

"And how *is* master, Rob?" said Polly.

"Well, I don't know, mother; not much to boast on. There a'n't no bis'ness done, you see. He don't know anything about it, the cap'en don't. There was a man come into the shop this very day, and says 'I want a so-and-so,' he says — some hard name or another. 'A which?' says the cap'en. 'A so-and-so,' says the man. 'Brother,' says the cap'en, 'will you take a observation round the shop?' 'Well,' says the man, 'I've done it.' 'Do you see wot you want?' says the cap'en. 'No, I don't,' says the man. 'Do you know it wen you *do* see it?' says the cap'en. 'No, I don't,' says the man. 'Why, then I tell you wot, my lad,' says the cap'en, 'you'd better go back and ask wot it's like, outside, for no more don't I!'"

"That a'n't the way to make money, though, is it?" said Polly.

"Money, mother! He'll never make money. He has such ways as I never see. He a'n't a bad master though,

I'll say that for him. But that a'n't much to me, for I don't think I shall stop with him long."

"Not stop in your place, Rob!" cried his mother; while Mr. Toodle opened his eyes.

"Not in that place, p'raps," returned the Grinder, with a wink. "I shouldn't wonder — friends at court you know — but never *you* mind, mother, just now; I'm all right, that's all."

The indisputable proof afforded in these hints, and in the Grinder's mysterious manner, of his not being subject to that failing which Mr. Toodle had, by implication, attributed to him, might have led to a renewal of his wrongs, and of the sensation in the family, but for the opportune arrival of another visitor, who to Polly's great surprise, appeared at the door, smiling patronage and friendship on all there.

"How do you do, Mrs. Richards?" said Miss Tox. "I have come to see you. May I come in?"

The cheery face of Mrs. Richards shone with a hospitable reply, and Miss Tox, accepting the proffered chair, and gracefully recognizing Mr. Toodle on her way to it, untied her bonnet-strings, and said that in the first place she must beg the dear children, one and all, to come and kiss her.

The ill-starred youngest Toodle but one, who would appear, from the frequency of his domestic troubles, to have been born under an unlucky planet, was prevented from performing his part in this general salutation by having fixed the sou'wester hat (with which he had been previously trifling) deep on his head, hind side before, and being unable to get it off again; which accident presenting to his terrified imagination a dismal picture of his passing the rest of his days in darkness, and in

hopeless seclusion from his friends and family, caused him to struggle with great violence, and to utter suffocating cries. Being released, his face was discovered to be very hot, and red, and damp; and Miss Tox took him on her lap, much exhausted.

"You have almost forgotten me, sir, I dare say," said Miss Tox to Mr. Toodle.

"No, ma'am, no," said Toodle. "But we've all on us got a little older since then."

"And how do you find yourself, sir?" inquired Miss Tox, blandly.

"Hearty, ma'am, thank'ee," replied Toodle. "How do *you* find *your*self, ma'am. Do the rheumaticks keep off pretty well, ma'am? We must all expect to grow into 'em, as we gets on."

"Thank you," said Miss Tox. "I have not felt any inconvenience from that disorder yet."

"You're wery fortunate, ma'am," returned Mr. Toodle. "Many people at your time of life, ma'am, is martyrs to it. There was my mother" —— But catching his wife's eye here, Mr. Toodle judiciously buried the rest in another mug of tea.

"You never mean to say, Mrs. Richards," cried Miss Tox, looking at Rob, "that that is your" ——

"Eldest, ma'am," said Polly. "Yes, indeed, it is. That's the little fellow, ma'am, that was the innocent cause of so much."

"This here, ma'am," said Toodle, "is him with the short legs — and they was," said Mr. Toodle, with a touch of poetry in his tone, "unusual short for leathers — as Mr. Dombey made a Grinder on."

The recollection almost overpowered Miss Tox. The subject of it had a peculiar interest for her directly.

She asked him to shake hands, and congratulated his mother on his frank, ingenuous face. Rob, overhearing her, called up a look, to justify the eulogium, but it was hardly the right look.

"And now, Mrs. Richards," said Miss Tox, — "and you too, sir," addressing Toodle — "I'll tell you, plainly and truly, what I have come here for. You may be aware, Mrs. Richards — and, possibly you may be aware too, sir — that a little distance has interposed itself between me and some of my friends, and that where I used to visit a good deal, I do not visit now."

Polly, who, with a woman's tact, understood this at once, expressed as much in a little look. Mr. Toodle who had not the faintest idea of what Miss Tox was talking about, expressed that also, in a stare.

"Of course," said Miss Tox, "how our little coolness has arisen is of no moment, and does not require to be discussed. It is sufficient for me to say, that I have the greatest possible respect for, and interest in, Mr. Dombey;" Miss Tox's voice faltered; "and everything that relates to him."

Mr. Toodle, enlightened, shook his head, and said he had heerd it said, and, for his own part, he did think, as Mr. Dombey was a difficult subject.

"Pray don't say so, sir, if you please," returned Miss Tox. "Let me entreat you not to say so, sir, either now, or at any future time. Such observations cannot but be very painful to me, and to a gentleman, whose mind is constituted as I am quite sure yours is, can afford no permanent satisfaction."

Mr. Toodle, who had not entertained the least doubt of offering a remark that would be received with acquiescence, was greatly confounded.

"All that I wish to say, Mrs. Richards," resumed Miss Tox, — "and I address myself to you too, sir, — is this. That any intelligence of the proceedings of the family, of the welfare of the family, of the health of the family, that reaches you, will be always most acceptable to me. That I shall be always very glad to chat with Mrs. Richards about the family, and about old times. And as Mrs. Richards and I never had the least indifference (though I could wish now that we had been better acquainted, but I have no one but myself to blame for that), I hope she will not object to our being very good friends now, and to my coming backwards and forwards here, when I like, without being a stranger. Now, I really hope Mrs. Richards," said Miss Tox, earnestly, "that you will take this, as I mean it, like a good-humored creature as you always were."

Polly was gratified, and showed it. Mr. Toodle didn't know whether he was gratified or not, and preserved a stolid calmness.

"You see, Mrs. Richards," said Miss Tox — "and I hope you see too, sir — there are many little ways in which I can be slightly useful to you, if you will make no stranger of me; and in which I shall be delighted to be so. For instance, I can teach your children something. I shall bring a few little books if you'll allow me, and some work, and of an evening now and then, they'll learn — dear me, they'll learn a great deal, I trust, and be a credit to their teacher."

Mr. Toodle, who had a great respect for learning, jerked his head approvingly at his wife, and moistened his hands with dawning satisfaction.

"Then, not being a stranger, I shall be in nobody's way," said Miss Tox, "and everything will go on just

as if I were not here. Mrs. Richards will do her mending, or her ironing, or her nursing, whatever it is, without minding me: and you'll smoke your pipe, too, if you're so disposed, sir, won't you?"

"Thank'ee mum," said Mr. Toodle. "Yes; I'll take my bit of backer."

"Very good of you to say so, sir," rejoined Miss Tox, "and I really do assure you now, unfeignedly, that it will be a great comfort to me, and that whatever good I may be fortunate enough to do the children, you will more than pay back to me, if you'll enter into this little bargain comfortably, and easily, and good-naturedly, without another word about it."

The bargain was ratified on the spot; and Miss Tox found herself so much at home already, that without delay she instituted a preliminary examination of the children all round — which Mr. Toodle much admired — and booked their ages, names, and acquirements, on a piece of paper. This ceremony, and a little attendant gossip, prolonged the time until after their usual hour of going to bed, and detained Miss Tox at the Toodle fireside until it was too late for her to walk home alone. The gallant Grinder, however, being still there, politely offered to attend her to her own door; and as it was something to Miss Tox, to be seen home by a youth whom Mr. Dombey had first inducted into those manly garments which are rarely mentioned by name, she very readily accepted the proposal.

After shaking hands with Mr. Toodle and Polly, and kissing all the children, Miss Tox left the house, therefore, with unlimited popularity, and carrying away with her so light a heart, that it might have given Mrs. Chick offence if that good lady could have weighed it.

Rob the Grinder, in his modesty, would have walked behind, but Miss Tox desired him to keep beside her, for conversational purposes; and, as she afterwards expressed it to his mother "drew him out," upon the road.

He drew out so bright, and clear, and shining, that Miss Tox was charmed with him. The more Miss Tox drew him out, the finer he came — like wire. There never was a better or more promising youth — a more affectionate, steady, prudent, sober, honest, meek, candid young man — than Rob drew out that night.

"I am quite glad," said Miss Tox, arrived at her own door, "to know you. I hope you'll consider me your friend, and that you'll come and see me as often as you like. Do you keep a money-box?"

"Yes, ma'am," returned Rob; "I'm saving up against I've got enough to put in the Bank, ma'am."

"Very laudable indeed," said Miss Tox. "I'm glad to hear it. Put this half-crown into it, if you please."

"Oh thank you, ma'am," replied Rob, "but really I couldn't think of depriving you."

"I commend your independent spirit," said Miss Tox, "but it's no deprivation, I assure you. I shall be offended if you don't take it, as a mark of my good-will. Good-night, Robin."

"Good-night, ma'am," said Rob, "and thank you!"

Who ran sniggering off to get change, and tossed it away with a pieman. But they never taught honor at the Grinders' School, where the system that prevailed was particularly strong in the engendering of hypocrisy. Insomuch, that many of the friends and masters of past Grinders said, if this were what came of education for the common people, let us have none.

Some more rational said, let us have a better one. But the governing powers of the Grinders' Company were always ready for *them*, by picking out a few boys who had turned out well, in spite of the system, and roundly asserting that they could have only turned out well because of it. Which settled the business of those objectors out of hand, and established the glory of the Grinders' Institution.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

FURTHER ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN EDWARD CUTTLE, MARINER.

TIME, sure of foot and strong of will, had so pressed onward, that the year enjoined by the old Instrument-maker, as the term during which his friend should refrain from opening the sealed packet accompanying the letter he had left for him, was now nearly expired, and Captain Cuttle began to look at it of an evening, with feelings of mystery and uneasiness.

The captain, in his honor, would as soon have thought of opening the parcel one hour before the expiration of the term, as he would have thought of opening himself, to study his own anatomy. He merely brought it out, at a certain stage of his first evening pipe, laid it on the table, and sat gazing at the outside of it, through the smoke, in silent gravity, for two or three hours at a spell. Sometimes, when he had contemplated it thus for a pretty long while, the captain would hitch his chair, by degrees, farther and farther off, as if to get beyond the range of its fascination; but if this were his design, he never succeeded: for even when he was brought up by the parlor wall, the packet still attracted him; or if his eyes, in thoughtful wandering roved to the ceiling or the fire, its image immediately followed, and posted itself conspicuously among the coals, or took up an advantageous position on the whitewash.

In respect of Heart's Delight, the captain's parental regard and admiration knew no change. But since his last interview with Mr. Carker, Captain Cuttle had come to entertain doubts whether his former intervention in behalf of that young lady and his dear boy Wal'r, had proved altogether so favorable as he could have wished, and as he at the time believed. The captain was troubled with a serious misgiving that he had done more harm than good, in short; and in his remorse and modesty he made the best atonement he could think of, by putting himself out of the way of doing any harm to any one, and, as it were, throwing himself overboard for a dangerous person.

Self-buried, therefore, among the instruments, the captain never went near Mr. Dombey's house, or reported himself in any way to Florence or Miss Nipper. He even severed himself from Mr. Perch, on the occasion of his next visit, by dryly informing that gentleman, that he thanked him for his company, but had cut himself adrift from all such acquaintance, as he didn't know what magazine he mightn't blow up, without meaning of it. In this self-imposed retirement, the captain passed whole days and weeks without interchanging a word with any one but Rob the Grinder, whom he esteemed as a pattern of disinterested attachment and fidelity. In this retirement, the captain, gazing at the packet of an evening, would sit smoking, and thinking of Florence and poor Walter, until they both seemed to his homely fancy to be dead, and to have passed away into eternal youth, the beautiful and innocent children of his first remembrance.

The captain did not, however, in his musings, neglect his own improvement, or the mental culture of Rob the

Grinder. That young man was generally required to read out of some book to the captain, for one hour every evening; and as the captain implicitly believed that all books were true, he accumulated, by this means, many remarkable facts. On Sunday nights, the captain always read for himself, before going to bed, a certain Divine Sermon once delivered on a Mount; and although he was accustomed to quote the text, without book, after his own manner, he appeared to read it with as reverent an understanding of its heavenly spirit, as if he had got it all by heart in Greek, and had been able to write any number of fierce theological disquisitions on its every phrase.

Rob the Grinder, whose reverence for the inspired writings, under the admirable system of the Grinders' School, had been developed by a perpetual bruising of his intellectual shins against all the proper names of all the tribes of Judah, and by the monotonous repetition of hard verses, especially by way of punishment, and by the parading of him at six years old in leather breeches three times a Sunday, very high up, in a very hot church, with a great organ buzzing against his drowsy head, like an exceedingly busy bee — Rob the Grinder made a mighty show of being edified when the captain ceased to read, and generally yawned and nodded while the reading was in progress. The latter fact being never so much as suspected by the good captain.

Captain Cuttle, also, as a man of business, took to keeping books. In these he entered observations on the weather, and on the currents of the wagons and other vehicles: which he observed in that quarter, to set westward in the morning and during the greater part of the day, and eastward towards the evening. Two or three

stragglers appearing in one week, who "spoke him" — so the captain entered it — on the subject of spectacles, and who, without positively purchasing, said they would look in again, the captain decided that the business was improving, and made an entry in the day-book to that effect; the wind then blowing (which he first recorded) pretty fresh, west and by north; having changed in the night.

One of the captain's chief difficulties was Mr. Toots, who called frequently, and who, without saying much, seemed to have an idea that the little back-parlor was an eligible room to chuckle in, as he would sit and avail himself of its accommodations in that regard by the half-hour together, without at all advancing in intimacy with the captain. The captain, rendered cautious by his late experience, was unable quite to satisfy his mind whether Mr. Toots was the mild subject he appeared to be, or was a profoundly artful and dissimulating hypocrite. His frequent reference to Miss Dombey was suspicious; but the captain had a secret kindness for Mr. Toots's apparent reliance on him, and forebore to decide against him for the present; merely eying him, with a sagacity not to be described, whenever he approached the subject that was nearest to his heart.

"Captain Gills," blurted out Mr. Toots, one day all at once, as his manner was, "do you think you could think favorably of that proposition of mine, and give me the pleasure of your acquaintance?"

"Why, I'll tell you what it is, my lad," replied the captain, who had at length concluded on a course of action; "I've been turning that there, over."

"Captain Gills, it's very kind of you," retorted Mr. Toots. "I'm much obliged to you. Upon my word

and honor, Captain Gills, it would be a charity to give me the pleasure of your acquaintance. It really would."

"You see, brother," argued the captain slowly, "I don't know you."

"But you never *can* know me, Captain Gills," replied Mr. Toots, steadfast to his point, "if you don't give me the pleasure of your acquaintance."

The captain seemed struck by the originality and power of this remark, and looked at Mr. Toots as if he thought there was a great deal more in him than he had expected.

"Well said, my lad," observed the captain, nodding his head thoughtfully; "and true. Now look'ee here: You've made some observations to me, which gives me to understand as you admire a certain sweet creetur. Hey?"

"Captain Gills," said Mr. Toots, gesticulating violently with the hand in which he held his hat, "Admiration is not the word. Upon my honor, you have no conception what my feelings are. If I could be dyed black, and made Miss Dombey's slave, I should consider it a compliment. If, at the sacrifice of all my property, I could get transmigrated into Miss Dombey's dog — I — I really think I should never leave off wagging my tail. I should be so perfectly happy, Captain Gills!"

Mr. Toots said it with watery eyes, and pressed his hat against his bosom with deep emotion.

"My lad," returned the captain, moved to compassion, "if you're in arnest" —

"Captain Gills," cried Mr. Toots, "I'm in such a state of mind, and am so dreadfully in earnest, that if I could

swear to it upon a hot piece of iron, or a live coal, or melted lead, or burning sealing-wax, or anything of that sort, I should be glad to hurt myself, as a relief to my feelings." And Mr. Toots looked hurriedly about the room, as if for some sufficiently painful means of accomplishing his dread purpose.

The captain pushed his glazed hat back upon his head, stroked his face down with his heavy hand — making his nose more mottled in the process — and planting himself before Mr. Toots, and hooking him by the lappel of his coat, addressed him in these words, while Mr. Toots looked up into his face with much attention and some wonder.

"If you're in arnest, you see, my lad," said the captain, "you're a object of clemency, and clemency is the brightest jewel in the crown of a Briton's head, for which you'll overhaul the constitution, as laid down in Rule Britannia, and, when found, *that* is the charter as them garden angels was a-singing of, so many times over. Stand by! This here proposal o' your'n takes me a little aback. And why? Because I holds my own only, you understand, in these here waters, and haven't got no consort, and may be don't wish for none. Steady! You hailed me first, along of a certain young lady, as you was chartered by. Now if you and me is to keep one another's company at all, that there young creetur's name must never be named nor referred to. I don't know what harm mayn't have been done by naming of it too free afore now, and thereby I brings up short. D'ye make me out pretty clear, brother?"

"Well, you'll excuse me, Captain Gills," replied Mr. Toots, "if I don't quite follow you sometimes. But upon my word I — it's a hard thing, Captain Gills, not

to be able to mention Miss Dombey. I really have got such a dreadful load here!" — Mr. Toots pathetically touched his shirt-front with both hands — "that I feel night and day exactly as if somebody was sitting upon me."

"Them," said the captain, "is the terms I offer. If they're hard upon you, brother, as mayhap they are, give 'em a wide berth, sheer off, and part company cheerily!"

"Captain Gills," returned Mr. Toots, "I hardly know how it is, but after what you told me when I came here, for the first time, I — I feel that I'd rather think about Miss Dombey in your society than talk about her in almost anybody else's. Therefore, Captain Gills, if you'll give me the pleasure of your acquaintance, I shall be very happy to accept it on your own conditions. I wish to be honorable, Captain Gills," said Mr. Toots, holding back his extended hand for a moment, "and therefore I am obliged to say that I *can not* help thinking about Miss Dombey. It's impossible for me to make a promise not to think about her."

"My lad," said the captain, whose opinion of Mr. Toots was much improved by this candid avowal, "a man's thoughts is like the winds, and nobody can't answer for 'em for certain, any length of time together. Is it a treaty as to words?"

"As to words, Captain Gills," returned Mr. Toots, "I think I can bind myself."

Mr. Toots gave Captain Cuttle his hand upon it, then and there; and the captain, with a pleasant and gracious show of condescension, bestowed his acquaintance upon him formally. Mr. Toots seemed much relieved and gladdened by the acquisition, and chuckled raptur-

ously during the remainder of his visit. The captain, for his part, was not ill pleased to occupy that position of patronage, and was exceedingly well satisfied by his own prudence and foresight.

But rich as Captain Cuttle was in the latter quality, he received a surprise that same evening from a no less ingenuous and simple youth, than Rob the Grinder. That artless lad, drinking tea at the same table, and bending meekly over his cup and saucer, having taken sidelong observations of his master for some time, who was reading the newspaper with great difficulty, but much dignity through his glasses, broke silence by saying —

"Oh! I beg your pardon, captain, but you mayn't be in want of any pigeons, may you, sir?"

"No, my lad," replied the captain.

"Because I was wishing to dispose of mine, captain," said Rob.

"Ay, ay?" cried the captain, lifting up his bushy eyebrows a little.

"Yes; I'm going, captain, if you please," said Rob.

"Going? Where are you going?" asked the captain, looking round at him over the glasses.

"What? didn't you know that I was going to leave you, captain?" asked Rob, with a sneaking smile.

The captain put down the paper, took off his spectacles, and brought his eyes to bear on the deserter.

"Oh yes, captain, I am going to give you warning. I thought you'd have known that beforehand, perhaps," said Rob, rubbing his hands, and getting up. "If you could be so good as provide yourself soon, captain, it would be a great convenience to me. You couldn't provide yourself by to-morrow morning, I am afraid, captain; could you, do you think?"

"And you're a-going to desert your colors are you, my lad?" said the captain, after a long examination of his face.

"Oh, it's very hard upon a cove, captain," cried the tender Rob, injured and indignant in a moment, "that he can't give lawful warning, without being frowned at in that way, and called a deserter. You haven't any right to call a poor cove names, captain. It a'n't because I'm a servant and you're a master, that you're to go and libel me. What wrong have I done? Come, captain, let me know what my crime is, will you?"

The stricken Grinder wept, and put his coat-cuff in his eye.

"Come, captain," cried the injured youth, "give my crime a name! What have I been and done? Have I stolen any of the property? Have I set the house afire? If I have, why don't you give me in charge, and try it? But to take away the character of a lad that's been a good servant to you, because he can't afford to stand in his own light for your good, what a injury it is, and what a bad return for faithful service! This is the way young coves is spiled and drove wrong. I wonder at you, captain, I do."

All of which the Grinder howled forth in a lachrymose whine, and backing carefully towards the door.

"And so you've got another berth, have you, my lad?" said the captain, eying him intently.

"Yes, captain, since you put it in that shape, I *have* got another berth," cried Rob, backing more and more; "a better berth than I've got here, and one where I don't so much as want your good word, captain, which is fort'nate for me, after all the dirt you've throw'd at me, because I'm poor, and can't afford to stand in my

own light for your good. Yes, I *have* got another berth; and if it wasn't for leaving you unprovided, captain, I'd go to it now, sooner than I'd take them names from you, because I'm poor, and can't afford to stand in my own light for your good. Why do you reproach me for being poor, and not standing in my own light for your good, captain? How can you so demean yourself?"

"Look ye here, my boy," replied the peaceful captain. "Don't you pay out no more of them words."

"Well, then, don't you pay in no more of your words, captain," retorted the roused innocent, getting louder in his whine, and backing into the shop. "I'd sooner you took my blood than my character."

"Because," pursued the captain calmly, "you have heerd, maybe, of such a thing as a rope's end."

"Oh, have I though, captain?" cried the taunting Grinder. "No I haven't. I never heerd of any such a article!"

"Well," said the captain, "it's my belief as you'll know more about it pretty soon, if you don't keep a bright look-out. I can read your signals, my lad. You may go."

"Oh! I may go at once, may I, captain?" cried Rob, exulting in his success. "But mind! *I* never asked to go at once, captain. You are not to take away my character again, because you send me off of your own accord. And you're not to stop any of my wages, captain!"

His employer settled the last point by producing the tin canister and telling the Grinder's money out in full upon the table. Rob, snivelling and sobbing, and grievously wounded in his feelings, took up the pieces one by one, with a sob and a snivel for each, and tied them

up separately in knots in his pocket-handkerchief; then he ascended to the roof of the house and filled his hat and pockets with pigeons; then, came down to his bed under the counter and made up his bundle, snivelling and sobbing louder, as if he were cut to the heart by old associations; then he whined "Good-night, captain. I leave you without malice!" and then, going out upon the door-step, pulled the little midshipman's nose as a parting indignity, and went away down the street grinning triumph.

The captain, left to himself, resumed his perusal of the news as if nothing unusual or unexpected had taken place, and went reading on with the greatest assiduity. But never a word did Captain Cuttle understand, though he read a vast number, for Rob the Grinder was scampering up one column and down another all through the newspaper.

It is doubtful whether the worthy captain had ever felt himself quite abandoned until now; but now, old Sol Gills, Walter, and Heart's Delight were lost to him indeed, and now Mr. Carker deceived and jeered him cruelly. They were all represented in the false Rob, to whom he had held forth many a time on the recollections that were warm within him; he had believed in the false Rob, and had been glad to believe in him; he had made a companion of him as the last of the old ship's company; he had taken the command of the little midshipman with him at his right hand; he had meant to do his duty by him, and had felt almost as kindly towards the boy as if they had been shipwrecked and cast upon a desert place together. And now that the false Rob had brought distrust, treachery, and meanness into the very parlor, which was a kind of sacred place, Captain Cuttle

felt as if the parlor might have gone down next, and not surprised him much by its sinking, or given him any very great concern.

Therefore Captain Cuttle read the newspaper with profound attention and no comprehension, and therefore Captain Cuttle said nothing whatever about Rob to himself, or admitted to himself that he was thinking about him, or would recognize in the most distant manner that Rob had anything to do with his feeling as lonely as Robinson Crusoe.

In the same composed, business-like way, the captain stepped over to Leadenhall Market in the dusk, and effected an arrangement with a private watchman on duty there, to come and put up and take down the shutters of the Wooden Midshipman every night and morning. He then called in at the eating-house to diminish by one half the daily rations theretofore supplied to the midshipman, and at the public-house to stop the traitor's beer. "My young man," said the captain, in explanation to the young lady at the bar, "my young man having bettered himself, miss." Lastly, the captain resolved to take possession of the bed under the counter, and to turn-in there o' nights instead of up-stairs, as sole guardian of the property.

From this bed Captain Cuttle daily rose thenceforth, and clapped on his glazed hat at six o'clock in the morning, with the solitary air of Crusoe finishing his toilet with his goat-skin cap; and although his fears of a visitation from the savage tribe, MacStinger, were somewhat cooled, as similar apprehensions on the part of that lone mariner used to be by the lapse of a long interval without any symptoms of the cannibals, he still observed a regular routine of defensive operations, and never en-

countered a bonnet without previous survey from his castle of retreat. In the mean time (during which he received no call from Mr. Toots, who wrote to say he was out of town) his own voice began to have a strange sound in his ears: and he acquired such habits of profound meditation from much polishing and stowing away of the stock, and from much sitting behind the counter reading, or looking out of window, that the red rim made on his forehead by the hard glazed hat, sometimes ached again with excess of reflection.

The year being now expired, Captain Cuttle deemed it expedient to open the packet; but as he had always designed doing this in the presence of Rob the Grinder, who had brought it to him, and as he had an idea that it would be regular and ship-shape to open it in the presence of somebody, he was sadly put to it for want of a witness. In this difficulty, he hailed one day with unusual delight the announcement in the Shipping Intelligence of the arrival of the Cautious Clara, Captain John Bunsby, from a coasting voyage; and to that philosopher immediately despatched a letter by post, enjoining inviolable secrecy as to his place of residence, and requesting to be favored with an early visit, in the evening season.

Bunsby, who was one of those sages who act upon conviction, took some days to get the conviction thoroughly into his mind, that he had received a letter to this effect. But when he had grappled with the fact, and mastered it, he promptly sent his boy with the message, "He's a-coming to-night." Who being instructed to deliver those words and disappear, fulfilled his mission like a tarry spirit, charged with a mysterious warning.

The captain, well pleased to receive it, made prepara-

tion of pipes and rum and water, and awaited his visitor in the back-parlor. At the hour of eight, a deep lowing, as of a nautical bull, outside the shop-door, succeeded by the knocking of a stick on the panel, announced to the listening ear of Captain Cuttle, that Bunsby was alongside; whom he instantly admitted, shaggy and loose, and with his stolid mahogany visage, as usual appearing to have no consciousness of anything before it, but to be attentively observing something that was taking place in quite another part of the world.

"Bunsby," said the captain, grasping him by the hand, "What cheer, my lad, what cheer?"

"Shipmet," replied the voice within Bunsby, unaccompanied by any sign on the part of the commander himself, "Hearty, hearty."

"Bunsby!" said the captain, rendering irrepressible homage to his genius, "here you are! a man as can give an opinion as is brighter than di'monds — and give me the lad with the tarry trousers as shines to me like di'monds bright, for which you'll overhaul the Stanfell's Budget, and when found make a note. Here you are, a man as gave an opinion in this here very place, that has come true, every letter on it," which the captain sincerely believed.

"Ay, ay?" growled Bunsby.

"Every letter," said the captain.

"For why?" growled Bunsby, looking at his friend for the first time. "Which way? If so, why not? Therefore." With these oracular words — they seemed almost to make the captain giddy; they launched him upon such a sea of speculation and conjecture — the sage submitted to be helped off with his pilot-coat, and accompanied his friend into the back-parlor, where his

hand presently alighted on the rum-bottle, from which he brewed a stiff glass of grog; and presently afterwards on a pipe, which he filled, lighted, and began to smoke.

Captain Cuttle, imitating his visitor in the matter of these particulars, though the rapt and imperturbable manner of the great commander was far above his powers, sat in the opposite corner of the fireside, observing him respectfully, and as if he waited for some encouragement or expression of curiosity on Bunsby's part which should lead him to his own affairs. But as the mahogany philosopher gave no evidence of being sentient of anything but warmth and tobacco, except once, when taking his pipe from his lips to make room for his glass, he incidentally remarked with exceeding gruffness, that his name was Jack Bunsby — a declaration that presented but small opening for conversation — the captain bespeaking his attention in a short complimentary exordium, narrated the whole history of Uncle Sol's departure, with the change it had produced in his own life and fortunes; and concluded by placing the packet on the table.

After a long pause, Mr. Bunsby nodded his head.

"Open?" said the captain.

Bunsby nodded again.

The captain accordingly broke the seal, and disclosed to view two folded papers, of which he severally read the indorsements, thus: "Last Will and Testament of Solomon Gills." "Letter for Ned Cuttle."

Bunsby, with his eye on the coast of Greenland, seemed to listen for the contents. The captain therefore hemmed to clear his throat, and read the letter aloud.

"'My dear Ned Cuttle. When I left home for the West Indies'" —

Here the captain stopped, and looked hard at Bunsby, who looked fixedly at the coast of Greenland.

— "'in forlorn search of intelligence of my dear boy, I knew that if you were acquainted with my design, you would thwart it, or accompany me; and therefore I kept it secret. If you ever read this letter, Ned, I am likely to be dead. You will easily forgive an old friend's folly then, and will feel for the restlessness and uncertainty in which he wandered away on such a wild voyage. So no more of that. I have little hope that my poor boy will ever read these words, or gladden your eyes with the sight of his frank face any more.' No, no; no more," said Captain Cuttle, sorrowfully meditating; "no more. There he lays, all his days" —

Mr. Bunsby, who had a musical ear, suddenly bellowed, "In the Bays of Biscay, O!" which so affected the good captain, as an appropriate tribute to departed worth, that he shook him by the hand in acknowledgment, and was fain to wipe his eyes.

"Well, well!" said the captain with a sigh, as the lament of Bunsby ceased to ring and vibrate in the skylight. "Affliction sore, long time he bore, and let us overhaul the wollume, and there find it."

"Physicians," observed Bunsby, "was in vain."

"Ay, ay, to be sure," said the captain, "what's the good o' *them* in two or three hundred fathoms o' water!" Then, returning to the letter, he read on: — "'But if he should be by, when it is opened;'" the captain involuntarily looked round, and shook his head; "'or should know of it at any other time;'" the captain shook his head again; "'my blessing on him! In case the

accompanying paper is not legally written, it matters very little, for there is no one interested but you and he, and my plain wish is, that if he is living he should have what little there may be, and if (as I fear) otherwise, that you should have it, Ned. You will respect my wish, I know. God bless you for it, and for all your friendliness besides, to SOLOMON GILLS.' Bunsby!" said the captain, appealing to him solemnly, "what do you make of this? There you sit, a man as has had his head broke from infancy up'ards, and has got a new opinion into it at every seam as has been opened. Now, what do you make o' this?"

"If so be," returned Bunsby, with unusual promptitude, "as he's dead, my opinion is he won't come back no more. If so be as he's alive, my opinion is he will. Do I say he will? No. Why not? Because the bearings of this obserwation lays in the application on it."

"Bunsby!" said Captain Cuttle, who would seem to have estimated the value of his distinguished friend's opinions in proportion to the immensity of the difficulty he experienced in making anything out of them; "Bunsby," said the captain, quite confounded by admiration, "you carry a weight of mind easy, as would swamp one of my tonnage soon. But in regard o' this here will, I don't mean to take no steps towards the property — Lord forbid! — except to keep it for a more rightful owner; and I hope yet as the rightful owner, Sol Gills, is living and 'll come back, strange as it is that he a'n't forwarded no dispatches. Now, what is your opinion, Bunsby, as to stowing of these here papers away again, and marking outside as they was opened, such a day, in presence of John Bunsby and Ed'ard Cuttle?"

Bunsby, descrying no objection, on the coast of Green-

land or elsewhere, to this proposal, it was carried into execution; and that great man, bringing his eye into the present for a moment, affixed his sign-manual to the cover, totally abstaining, with characteristic modesty, from the use of capital letters. Captain Cuttle, having attached his own left-handed signature, and locked up the packet in the iron safe, entreated his guest to mix another glass and smoke another pipe; and doing the like himself, fell a-musing over the fire on the possible fortunes of the poor old Instrument-maker.

And now a surprise occurred, so overwhelming and terrific that Captain Cuttle, unsupported by the presence of Bunsby, must have sunk beneath it, and been a lost man from that fatal hour.

How the captain, even in the satisfaction of admitting such a guest, could have only shut the door, and not locked it, of which negligence he was undoubtedly guilty, is one of those questions that must forever remain mere points of speculation, or vague charges against destiny. But by that unlocked door, at this quiet moment, did the fell MacStinger dash into the parlor, bringing Alexander MacStinger in her parental arms, and confusion and vengeance (not to mention Juliana MacStinger, and the sweet child's brother, Charles MacStinger, popularly known about the scenes of his youthful sports, as Chowley) in her train. She came so swiftly and so silently, like a rushing air from the neighborhood of the East India Docks, that Captain Cuttle found himself in the very act of sitting looking at her, before the calm face with which he had been meditating, changed to one of horror and dismay.

But the moment Captain Cuttle understood the full extent of his misfortune, self-preservation dictated an at-

tempt at flight. Darting at the little door which opened from the parlor on the steep little range of cellar-steps, the captain made a rush, head-foremost, at the latter, like a man indifferent to bruises and contusions, who only sought to hide himself in the bowels of the earth. In this gallant effort he would probably have succeeded, but for the affectionate dispositions of Juliana and Chowley, who pinning him by the legs — one of those dear children holding on to each — claimed him as their friend, with lamentable cries. In the mean time, Mrs. MacStinger, who never entered upon any action of importance without previously inverting Alexander MacStinger, to bring him within the range of a brisk battery of slaps, and then sitting him down to cool as the reader first beheld him, performed that solemn rite, as if on this occasion it were a sacrifice to the Furies; and having deposited the victim on the floor, made at the captain with a strength of purpose that appeared to threaten scratches to the interposing Bunsby.

The cries of the two elder MacStingers, and the wailing of young Alexander, who may be said to have passed a piebald childhood, forasmuch as he was black in the face during one half of that fairy period of existence, combined to make this visitation the more awful. But when silence reigned again, and the captain, in a violent perspiration, stood meekly looking at Mrs. MacStinger, its terrors were at their height.

"Oh, Cap'en Cuttle, Cap'en Cuttle!" said Mrs. MacStinger, making her chin rigid, and shaking it in unison with what, but for the weakness of her sex, might be described as her fist. "Oh, Cap'en Cuttle, Cap'en Cuttle, do you dare to look me in the face, and not be struck down in the herth!"

The captain, who looked anything but daring, feebly muttered "Stand by!"

"Oh I was a weak and trusting fool when I took you under *my* roof, Cap'en Cuttle, I was!" cried Mrs. MacStinger. "To think of the benefits I've showered on that man, and the way in which I brought my children up to love and *h*onor him as if he was a father to 'em, when there a'n't a 'ousekeeper, no nor a lodger in our street, don't know that I lost money by that man, and by his guzzlings and his muzzlings" — Mrs. MacStinger used the last word for the joint sake of alliteration and aggravation, rather than for the expression of any idea — "and when they cried out one and all, shame upon him for putting upon an industrious woman, up early and late for the good of her young family, and keeping her poor place so clean that a individual might have ate his dinner, yes, and his tea too, if he was so disposed, off any one of the floors or stairs, in spite of all his guzzlings *and* his muzzlings, such was the care and pains bestowed upon him!"

Mrs. MacStinger stopped to fetch her breath; and her face flushed with triumph in this second happy introduction of Captain Cuttle's muzzlings.

"And he runs awa-a-a-ay!" cried Mrs. MacStinger, with a lengthening-out of the last syllable that made the unfortunate captain regard himself as the meanest of men; "and keeps away a twelvemonth! From a woman! Sitch is his conscience! He hasn't the courage to meet her hi-i-i-igh;" long syllable again; "but steals away, like a felion. Why, if that baby of mine," said Mrs. MacStinger, with sudden rapidity, "was to offer to go and steal away, I'd do my duty as a mother by him, till he was covered with wales!"

The young Alexander, interpreting this into a positive promise, to be shortly redeemed, tumbled over with fear and grief, and lay upon the floor, exhibiting the soles of his shoes and making such a deafening outcry, that Mrs. MacStinger found it necessary to take him up in her arms, where she quieted him, ever and anon, as he broke out again, by a shake that seemed enough to loosen his teeth.

"A pretty sort of a man is Cap'en Cuttle," said Mrs. MacStinger, with a sharp stress on the first syllable of the captain's name, "to take on for — and to lose sleep for, and to faint along of — and to think dead forsooth — and to go up and down the blessed town like a mad woman, asking questions after! Oh, a pretty sort of a man! Ha, ha, ha, ha! He's worth all that trouble and distress of mind, and much more. *That's* nothing, bless you! Ha, ha, ha, ha! Cap'en Cuttle," said Mrs. MacStinger, with severe reaction in her voice and manner, "I wish to know if you're a-coming home."

The frightened captain looked into his hat, as if he saw nothing for it but to put it on, and give himself up.

"Cap'en Cuttle," repeated Mrs. MacStinger, in the same determined manner, "I wish to know if you're a-coming home, sir."

The captain seemed quite ready to go, but faintly suggested something to the effect of "not making so much noise about it."

"Ay, ay, ay," said Bunsby, in a soothing tone. "Awast, my lass, awast!"

"And who may YOU be, if you please!" retorted Mrs. MacStinger, with chaste loftiness. "Did you ever lodge at Number Nine, Brig-place, sir? My memory may be

bad, but not with me, I think. There was a Mrs. Jollson lived at Number Nine before me, and perhaps you're mistaking me for her. That is my only ways of accounting for your familiarity, sir."

"Come, come, my lass, awast, awast!" said Bunsby.

Captain Cuttle could hardly believe it, even of this great man, though he saw it done with his waking eyes; but Bunsby, advancing boldly, put his shaggy blue arm round Mrs. MacStinger, and so softened her by his magic way of doing it, and by these few words — he said no more — that she melted into tears, after looking upon him for a few moments, and observed that a child might conquer her now, she was so low in her courage.

Speechless and utterly amazed, the captain saw him gradually persuade this inexorable woman into the shop, return for rum and water and a candle, take them to her, and pacify her without appearing to utter one word. Presently he looked in with his pilot-coat on, and said, "Cuttle, I'm a-going to act as convoy home;" and Captain Cuttle, more to his confusion than if he had been put in irons himself, for safe transport to Brig-place, saw the family pacifically filing off, with Mrs. MacStinger at their head. He had scarcely time to take down his canister, and stealthily convey some money into the hands of Juliana MacStinger, his former favorite, and Chowley, who had the claim upon him that he was naturally of a maritime build, before the Midshipman was abandoned by them all; and Bunsby, whispering that he'd carry on smart, and hail Ned Cuttle again before he went aboard, shut the door upon himself, as the last member of the party.

Some uneasy ideas that he must be walking in his sleep, or that he had been troubled with phantoms, and

not a family of flesh and blood, beset the captain at first, when he went back to the little parlor, and found himself alone. Illimitable faith in, and immeasurable admiration of, the commander of the Cautious Clara, succeeded, and threw the captain into a wondering trance.

Still, as time wore on, and Bunsby failed to reappear, the captain began to entertain uncomfortable doubts of another kind. Whether Bunsby had been artfully decoyed to Brig-place, and was there detained in safe custody as hostage for his friend; in which case it would become the captain, as a man of honor, to release him, by the sacrifice of his own liberty. Whether he had been attacked and defeated by Mrs. MacStinger, and was ashamed to show himself after his discomfiture. Whether Mrs. MacStinger, thinking better of it, in the uncertainty of her temper, had turned back to board the Midshipman again, and Bunsby, pretending to conduct her by a short cut, was endeavoring to lose the family amid the wilds and savage places of the city. Above all, what it would behoove him, Captain Cuttle, to do, in case of his hearing no more, either of the MacStingers or of Bunsby, which, in these wonderful and unforeseen conjunctions of events, might possibly happen.

He debated all this until he was tired; and still no Bunsby. He made up his bed under the counter, all ready for turning in; and still no Bunsby. At length, when the captain had given him up, for that night, at least, and had begun to undress, the sound of approaching wheels was heard, and, stopping at the door, was succeeded by Bunsby's hail.

The captain trembled to think that Mrs. MacStinger was not to be got rid of, and had been brought back in a coach.

But no. Bunsby was accompanied by nothing but a large box, which he hauled into the shop with his own hands, and as soon as he had hauled in, sat upon. Captain Cuttle knew it for the chest he had left at Mrs. MacStinger's house, and looking, candle in hand, at Bunsby more attentively, believed that he was three sheets in the wind, or, in plain words, drunk. It was difficult, however, to be sure of this; the commander having no trace of expression in his face when sober.

"Cuttle," said the commander, getting off the chest, and opening the lid, "are these here your traps?"

Captain Cuttle looked in and identified his property.

"Done pretty taut and trim, hey, shipmet?" said Bunsby.

The grateful and bewildered captain grasped him by the hand, and was launching into a reply expressive of his astonished feelings, when Bunsby disengaged himself by a jerk of his wrist, and seemed to make an effort to wink with his revolving eye, the only effect of which attempt, in his condition, was nearly to overbalance him. He then abruptly opened the door, and shot away to rejoin the Cautious Clara with all speed — supposed to be his invariable custom, whenever he considered he had made a point.

As it was not his humor to be often sought, Captain Cuttle decided not to go or send to him next day, or until he should make his gracious pleasure known in such wise, or failing that, until some little time should have elapsed. The captain, therefore, renewed his solitary life next morning, and thought profoundly, many mornings, noons, and nights, of old Sol Gills, and Bunsby's sentiments concerning him, and the hopes there were of his return. Much of such thinking strengthened Cap-

tain Cuttle's hopes; and he humored them and himself by watching for the Instrument-maker at the door as he ventured to do now, in his strange liberty — and setting his chair in its place, and arranging the little parlor as it used to be, in case he should come home unexpectedly. He likewise, in his thoughtfulness, took down a certain little miniature of Walter as a schoolboy, from its accustomed nail, lest it should shock the old man on his return. The captain had his presentiments, too, sometimes, that he would come on such a day; and one particular Sunday, even ordered a double allowance of dinner, he was so sanguine. But come, old Solomon did not; and still the neighbors noticed how the seafaring man in the glazed hat, stood at the shop-door of an evening, looking up and down the street.

CHAPTER XL.

DOMESTIC RELATIONS.

It was not in the nature of things that a man of Mr. Dombey's mood, opposed to such a spirit as he had raised against himself, should be softened in the imperious asperity of his temper; or that the cold hard armor of pride in which he lived encased, should be made more flexible by constant collision with haughty scorn and defiance. It is the curse of such a nature — it is a main part of the heavy retribution on itself it bears within itself — that while deference and concession swell its evil qualities, and are the food it grows upon, resistance, and a questioning of its exacting claims, foster it too, no less. The evil that is in it finds equally its means of growth and propagation in opposites. It draws support and life from sweets and bitters; bowed down before, or unacknowledged, it still enslaves the breast in which it has its throne; and, worshipped or rejected, is as hard a master as the Devil in dark fables.

Towards his first wife, Mr. Dombey, in his cold and lofty arrogance, had borne himself like the removed being he almost conceived himself to be. He had been "Mr. Dombey" with her when she first saw him, and he was "Mr. Dombey" when she died. He had asserted his greatness during their whole married life, and she had meekly recognized it. He had kept his distant seat

of state on the top of his throne, and she her humble station on its lowest step; and much good it had done him, so to live in solitary bondage to his one idea. He had imagined that the proud character of his second wife would have been added to his own — would have merged into it, and exalted his greatness. He had pictured himself haughtier than ever, with Edith's haughtiness subservient to his. He had never entertained the possibility of its arraying itself against him. And now, when he found it rising in his path at every step and turn of his daily life, fixing its cold, defiant, and contemptuous face upon him, this pride of his, instead of withering, or hanging down its head beneath the shock, put forth new shoots, became more concentrated and intense, more gloomy, sullen, irksome, and unyielding, than it had ever been before.

Who wears such armor, too, bears with him ever another heavy retribution. It is of proof against conciliation, love, and confidence; against all gentle sympathy from without, all trust, all tenderness, all soft emotion; but to deep stabs in the self-love, it is as vulnerable as the bare breast to steel; and such tormenting festers rankle there, as follow on no other wounds, no, though dealt with the mailed hand of pride itself, on weaker pride, disarmed and thrown down.

Such wounds were his. He felt them sharply, in the solitude of his old rooms; whither he now began often to retire again, and pass long solitary hours. It seemed his fate to be ever proud and powerful; ever humbled and powerless where he would be most strong. Who seemed fated to work out that doom?

Who? Who was it who could win his wife as she had won his boy! Who was it who had shown him that

new victory, as he sat in the dark corner! Who was it whose least word did what his utmost means could not? Who was it who, unaided by his love, regard, or notice, thrived and grew beautiful when those so aided died! Who could it be, but the same child at whom he had often glanced uneasily in her motherless infancy, with a kind of dread, lest he might come to hate her; and of whom his foreboding was fulfilled, for he DID hate her in his heart.

Yes, and he would have it hatred, and he made it hatred, though some sparkles of the light in which she had appeared before him on the memorable night of his return home with his bride, occasionally hung about her still. He knew now that she was beautiful; he did not dispute that she was graceful and winning, and that in the bright dawn of her womanhood she had come upon him, a surprise. But he turned even this against her. In his sullen and unwholesome brooding, the unhappy man, with a dull perception of his alienation from all hearts, and a vague yearning for what he had all his life repelled, made a distorted picture of his rights and wrongs, and justified himself with it against her. The worthier she promised to be of him, the greater claim he was disposed to antedate upon her duty and submission. When had she ever shown him duty and submission? Did she grace his life — or Edith's? Had her attractions been manifested first to him — or Edith? Why, he and she had never been, from her birth, like father and child! They had always been estranged. She had crossed him every way and everywhere. She was leagued against him now. Her very beauty softened natures that were obdurate to him, and insulted him with an unnatural triumph.

It may have been that in all this there were mutterings of an awakened feeling in his breast, however selfishly aroused by his position of disadvantage, in comparison with what she might have made his life. But he silenced the distant thunder with the rolling of his sea of pride. He would bear nothing but his pride. And in his pride, a heap of inconsistency, and misery, and self-inflicted torment, he hated her.

To the moody, stubborn, sullen demon, that possessed him, his wife opposed her different pride in its full force. They never could have led a happy life together; but nothing could have made it more unhappy, than the wilful and determined warfare of such elements. His pride was set upon maintaining his magnificent supremacy, and forcing recognition of it from her. She would have been racked to death, and turned but her haughty glance of calm inflexible disdain upon him, to the last. Such recognition from Edith! He little knew through what a storm and struggle she had been driven onward to the crowning honor of his hand. He little knew how much she thought she had conceded, when she suffered him to call her wife.

Mr. Dombey was resolved to show her that he was supreme. There must be no will but his. Proud he desired that she should be, but she must be proud for, not against him. As he sat alone, hardening, he would often hear her go out and come home, treading the round of London life with no more heed of his liking or disliking, pleasure or displeasure, than if he had been her groom. Her cold supreme indifference — his own unquestioned attribute usurped — stung him more than any other kind of treatment could have done; and he determined to bend her to his magnificent and stately will.

He had been long communing with these thoughts, when one night he sought her in her own apartment, after he had heard her return home late. She was alone, in her brilliant dress, and had but that moment come from her mother's room. Her face was melancholy and pensive, when he came upon her; but it marked him at the door; for, glancing at the mirror before it, he saw immediately, as in a picture-frame, the knitted brow, and darkened beauty that he knew so well.

"Mrs. Dombey," he said, entering, "I must beg leave to have a few words with you."

"To-morrow," she replied.

"There is no time like the present, madam," he returned. "You mistake your position. I am used to choose my own times; not to have them chosen for me. I think you scarcely understand who and what I am, Mrs. Dombey."

"I think," she answered, "that I understand you very well."

She looked upon him as she said so, and folding her white arms, sparkling with gold and gems, upon her swelling breast, turned away her eyes.

If she had been less handsome, and less stately in her cold composure, she might not have had the power of impressing him with the sense of disadvantage that penetrated through his utmost pride. But she had the power, and he felt it keenly. He glanced round the room: saw how the splendid means of personal adornment, and the luxuries of dress, were scattered here and there, and disregarded; not in mere caprice and carelessness (or so he thought), but in a steadfast, haughty, disregard of costly things: and felt it more and more. Chaplets of flowers,

plumes of feathers, jewels, laces, silks, and satins; look where he would, he saw riches, despised, poured out, and made of no account. The very diamonds — a marriage gift — that rose and fell impatiently upon her bosom, seemed to pant to break the chain that clasped them round her neck, and roll down on the floor where she might tread upon them.

He felt his disadvantage, and he showed it. Solemn and strange among this wealth of color and voluptuous glitter, strange and constrained towards its haughty mistress, whose repellant beauty it repeated, and presented all around him, as in so many fragments of a mirror, he was conscious of embarrassment and awkwardness. Nothing that ministered to her disdainful self-possession could fail to gall him. Galled and irritated with himself, he sat down, and went on in no improved humor:

"Mrs. Dombey, it is very necessary that there should be some understanding arrived at between us. Your conduct does not please me, madam."

She merely glanced at him again, and again averted her eyes; but she might have spoken for an hour, and expressed less.

"I repeat, Mrs. Dombey, does not please me. I have already taken occasion to request that it may be corrected. I now insist upon it."

"You chose a fitting occasion for your first remonstrance, sir, and you adopt a fitting manner, and a fitting word for your second. *You* insist! To *me!*"

"Madam," said Mr. Dombey, with his most offensive air of state, "I have made you my wife. You bear my name. You are associated with my position and my reputation. I will not say that the world in general may be disposed to think you honored by that association; but

I will say that I am accustomed to 'insist,' to my connections and dependents."

"Which may you be pleased to consider me?" she asked.

"Possibly I may think that my wife should partake — or does partake, and cannot help herself — of both characters, Mrs. Dombey."

She bent her eyes upon him steadily, and set her trembling lips. He saw her bosom throb, and saw her face flush and turn white. All this he could know, and did: but he could not know that one word was whispering in the deep recesses of her heart, to keep her quiet; and that the word was Florence.

Blind idiot, rushing to a precipice! He thought she stood in awe of *him!*

"You are too expensive, madam," said Mr. Dombey. "You are extravagant. You waste a great deal of money — or what would be a great deal in the pockets of most gentlemen — in cultivating a kind of society that is useless to me, and, indeed, that upon the whole is disagreeable to me. I have to insist upon a total change in all these respects. I know that in the novelty of possessing a tithe of such means as fortune has placed at your disposal, ladies are apt to run into a sudden extreme. There has been more than enough of that extreme. I beg that Mrs. Granger's very different experiences may now come to the instruction of Mrs. Dombey."

Still the fixed look, the trembling lips, the throbbing breast, the face now crimson and now white; and still the deep whisper Florence, Florence, speaking to her in the beating of her heart.

His insolence of self-importance dilated as he saw this

alteration in her. Swollen no less by her past scorn of him, and his so recent feeling of disadvantage, than by her present submission (as he took it to be), it became too mighty for his breast, and burst all bounds. Why, who could long resist his lofty will and pleasure! He had resolved to conquer her, and look here!

"You will further please, madam," said Mr. Dombey, in a tone of sovereign command, "to understand distinctly, that I am to be deferred to and obeyed. That I must have a positive show and confession of deference before the world, madam. I am used to this. I require it as my right. In short I will have it. I consider it no unreasonable return for the worldly advancement that has befallen you; and I believe nobody will be surprised. either at its being required from you, or at your making it. — To me — to me!" he added, with emphasis.

No word from her. No change in her. Her eyes upon him.

"I have learnt from your mother, Mrs. Dombey," said Mr. Dombey, with magisterial importance, "what no doubt you know, namely, that Brighton is recommended for her health. Mr. Carker has been so good" —

She changed suddenly. Her face and bosom glowed as if the red light of an angry sunset had been flung upon them. Not unobservant of the change, and putting his own interpretation upon it, Mr. Dombey resumed:

"Mr. Carker has been so good as to go down and secure a house there, for a time. On the return of the establishment to London, I shall take such steps for its better management as I consider necessary. One of these, will be the engagement at Brighton (if it is to be effected), of a very respectable reduced person there, a Mrs. Pipchin, formerly employed in a situation of trust

in my family, to act as house-keeper. An establishment like this, presided over but nominally, Mrs. Dombey, requires a competent head."

She had changed her attitude before he arrived at these words, and now sat — still looking at him fixedly — turning a bracelet round and round upon her arm; not winding it about with a light womanly touch, but pressing and dragging it over the smooth skin, until the white limb showed a bar of red.

"I observed," said Mr. Dombey — "and this concludes what I deem it necessary to say to you at present, Mrs. Dombey — I observed a moment ago, madam, that my allusion to Mr. Carker was received in a peculiar manner. On the occasion of my happening to point out to you, before that confidential agent, the objection I had to your mode of receiving my visitors, you were pleased to object to his presence. You will have to get the better of that objection, madam, and to accustom yourself to it very probably on many similar occasions; unless you adopt the remedy which is in your own hands, of giving me no cause of complaint. Mr. Carker," said Mr. Dombey, who, after the emotion he had just seen, set great store by this means of reducing his proud wife, and who was perhaps sufficiently willing to exhibit his power to that gentleman in a new and triumphant aspect, "Mr. Carker being in my confidence, Mrs. Dombey, may very well be in yours to such an extent. I hope, Mrs. Dombey," he continued, after a few moments, during which, in his increasing haughtiness, he had improved on his idea, "I may not find it necessary ever to intrust Mr. Carker with any message of objection or remonstrance to you; but as it would be derogatory to my position and reputation to be frequently holding trivial disputes with

a lady upon whom I have conferred the highest distinction that it is in my power to bestow, I shall not scruple to avail myself of his services if I see occasion."

"And now," he thought, rising in his moral magnificence, and rising a stiffer and more impenetrable man than ever, "she knows me and my resolution."

The hand that had so pressed the bracelet was laid heavily upon her breast, but she looked at him still, with an unaltered face, and said in a low voice:

"Wait! For God's sake! I must speak to you."

Why did she not, and what was the inward struggle that rendered her incapable of doing so, for minutes, while, in the strong constraint she put upon her face, it was as fixed as any statue's — looking upon him with neither yielding nor unyielding, liking nor hatred, pride nor humility: nothing but a searching gaze.

"Did I ever tempt you to seek my hand? Did I ever use any art to win you? Was I ever more conciliating to you when you pursued me, than I have been since our marriage? Was I ever other to you than I am?"

"It is wholly unnecessary, madam," said Mr. Dombey, "to enter upon such discussions."

"Did you think I loved you? Did you know I did not? Did you ever care, man! for my heart, or propose to yourself to win the worthless thing? Was there any poor pretence of any in our bargain? Upon your side, or on mine?"

"These questions," said Mr. Dombey, "are all wide of the purpose, madam."

She moved between him and the door to prevent his going away, and drawing her majestic figure to its height, looked steadily upon him still.

"You answer each of them. You answer me before I

speak, I see. How can you help it; you who know the miserable truth as well as I? Now, tell me. If I loved you to devotion, could I do more than render up my whole will and being to you, as you have just demanded? If my heart were pure and all untried, and you its idol, could you ask more; could you have more?"

"Possibly not, madam," he returned coolly.

"You know how different I am. You see me looking on you now, and you can read the warmth of passion for you that is breathing in my face." Not a curl of the proud lip, not a flash of the dark eye, nothing but the same intent and searching look, accompanied these words. "You know my general history. You have spoken of my mother. Do you think you can degrade, or bend, or break *me* to submission and obedience?"

Mr. Dombey smiled, as he might have smiled at an inquiry whether he thought he could raise ten thousand pounds.

"If there is anything unusual here," she said, with a slight motion of her hand before her brow, which did not for a moment flinch from its immovable and otherwise expressionless gaze, "as I know there are unusual feelings here," raising the hand she pressed upon her bosom, and heavily returning it, "consider that there is no common meaning in the appeal I am going to make you. Yes, for I am going;" she said it as in prompt reply to something in his face; "to appeal to you."

Mr. Dombey, with a slightly condescending bend of his chin that rustled and cracked his stiff cravat, sat down on a sofa that was near him, to hear the appeal.

"If you can believe that I am of such a nature now," —he fancied he saw tears glistening in her eyes, and he thought, complacently, that he had forced them from her,

though none fell on her cheek, and she regarded him as steadily as ever, — "as would make what I now say almost incredible to myself, said to any man who had become my husband, but, above all, said to you, you may, perhaps, attach the greater weight to it. In the dark end to which we are tending, and may come, we shall not involve ourselves alone (that might not be much), but others."

Others! He knew at whom that word pointed, and frowned heavily.

"I speak to you for the sake of others. Also your own sake; and for mine. Since our marriage, you have been arrogant to me; and I have repaid you in kind. You have shown to me and every one around us, every day and hour, that you think I am graced and distinguished by your alliance. I do not think so, and have shown that too. It seems you do not understand, or (so far as your power can go) intend that each of us shall take a separate course; and you expect from me instead, a homage you will never have."

Although her face was still the same, there was emphatic confirmation of this "Never," in the very breath she drew.

"I feel no tenderness towards you; that you know. You would care nothing for it, if I did or could. I know as well that you feel none towards me. But we are linked together; and in the knot that ties us, as I have said, others are bound up. We must both die; we are both connected with the dead already, each by a little child. Let us forbear."

Mr. Dombey took a long respiration, as if he would have said, Oh! was *this* all!

"There is no wealth," she went on, turning paler as

she watched him, while her eyes grew yet more lustrous in their earnestness, "that could buy these words of me, and the meaning that belongs to them. Once cast away as idle breath, no wealth or power can bring them back. I mean them; I have weighed them; and I will be true to what I undertake. If you will promise to forbear on your part, I will promise to forbear on mine. We are a most unhappy pair, in whom, from different causes, every sentiment that blesses marriage, or justifies it, is rooted out; but in the course of time, some friendship, or some fitness for each other, may arise between us. I will try to hope so, if you will make the endeavor too; and I will look forward to a better and a happier use of age than I have made of youth or prime."

Throughout she had spoken in a low plain voice, that neither rose nor fell; ceasing, she dropped the hand with which she had enforced herself to be so passionless and distinct, but not the eyes with which she had so steadily observed him.

"Madam," said Mr. Dombey, with his utmost dignity, "I cannot entertain any proposal of this extraordinary nature."

She looked at him yet, without the least change.

"I cannot," said Mr. Dombey, rising as he spoke, "consent to temporize or treat with you, Mrs. Dombey, upon a subject as to which you are in possession of my opinions and expectations. I have stated my *ultimatum*, madam, and have only to request your very serious attention to it."

To see the face change to its old expression, deepened in intensity! To see the eyes droop as from some mean and odious object! To see the lighting of the haughty brow! To see scorn, anger, indignation, and abhorrence

starting into sight, and the pale blank earnestness vanish like a mist! He could not choose but look, although he looked to his dismay.

"Go, sir!" she said, pointing with an imperious hand towards the door. "Our first and last confidence is at an end. Nothing can make us stranger to each other than we are henceforth."

"I shall take my rightful course, madam," said Mr. Dombey, "undeterred, you may be sure, by any general declamation."

She turned her back upon him, and, without reply, sat down before her glass.

"I place my reliance on your improved sense of duty, and more correct feeling, and better reflection, madam," said Mr. Dombey.

She answered not one word. He saw no more expression of any heed of him, in the mirror, than if he had been an unseen spider on the wall, or beetle on the floor, or rather, than if he had been the one or other, seen and crushed when she last turned from him, and forgotten among the ignominious and dead vermin of the ground.

He looked back, as he went out at the door, upon the well-lighted and luxurious room, the beautiful and glittering objects everywhere displayed, the shape of Edith in its rich dress seated before her glass, and the face of Edith as the glass presented it to him; and betook himself to his old chamber of cogitation, carrying away with him a vivid picture in his mind of all these things, and a rambling and unaccountable speculation (such as sometimes comes into a man's head) how they would all look when he saw them next.

For the rest, Mr. Dombey was very taciturn, and very

dignified, and very confident of carrying out his purpose; and remained so.

He did not design accompanying the family to Brighton; but he graciously informed Cleopatra at breakfast, on the morning of departure, which arrived a day or two afterwards, that he might be expected down, soon. There was no time to be lost in getting Cleopatra to any place recommended as being salutary; for, indeed, she seemed upon the wane, and turning of the earth, earthy.

Without having undergone any decided second attack of her malady, the old woman seemed to have crawled backward in her recovery from the first. She was more lean and shrunken, more uncertain in her imbecility, and made stranger confusions in her mind and memory. Among other symptoms of this last affliction, she fell into the habit of confounding the names of her two sons-in-law, the living and the deceased; and in general called Mr. Dombey, either "Grangeby," or "Domber," or indifferently, both.

But she was youthful, very youthful still; and in her youthfulness appeared at breakfast, before going away, in a new bonnet, made express, and a travelling robe that was embroidered and braided like an old baby's. It was not easy to put her into a fly-away bonnet now, or to keep the bonnet in its place on the back of her poor nodding head, when it was got on. In this instance, it had not only the extraneous effect of being always on one side, but of being perpetually tapped on the crown by Flowers the maid, who attended in the background during breakfast to perform that duty.

"Now my dearest Grangeby," said Mrs. Skewton, "you must posively prom," she cut some of her words

short, and cut out others altogether, "come down very soon."

"I said just now, madam," returned Mr. Dombey, loudly, and laboriously, "that I am coming in a day or two."

"Bless you, Domber!"

Here the major, who was come to take leave of the ladies, and who was staring through his apoplectic eyes at Mrs. Skewton's face, with the disinterested composure of an immortal being, said:

"Begad, ma'am, you don't ask old Joe to come!"

"Sterious wretch, who's he?" lisped Cleopatra. But a tap on the bonnet from Flowers seeming to jog her memory, she added, "Oh! You mean yourself, you naughty creature!"

"Devilish queer, sir," whispered the major to Mr. Dombey. "Bad case. Never *did* wrap up enough;" the major being buttoned to the chin. "Why who should J. B. mean by Joe, but old Joe Bagstock — Joseph — Your slave — Joe, ma'am? Here! Here's the man! Here are the Bagstock bellows, ma'am!" cried the major, striking himself a sounding blow on the chest.

"My dearest Edith — Grangeby — it's most trordinry thing," said Cleopatra, pettishly, "that Major" —

"Bagstock! J. B.!" cried the major, seeing that she faltered for his name.

"Well, it don't matter," said Cleopatra, "Edith, my love, you know I never could remember names — what was it? oh! — most trordinry thing that so many people want to come down to see me. I'm not going for long. I'm coming back. Surely they can wait, till I come back!"

Cleopatra looked all round the table as she said it, and appeared very uneasy.

"I won't have visitors — really don't want visitors," she said; "little repose — and all that sort of thing — is what I quire. No odious brutes must proach me till I've shaken off this numbness;" and in a grisly resumption of her coquettish ways, she made a dab at the major with her fan, but overset Mr. Dombey's breakfast-cup instead, which was in quite a different direction.

Then she called for Withers, and charged him to see particularly that word was left about some trivial alterations in her room, which must be all made before she came back, and which must be set about immediately, as there was no saying how soon she might come back; for she had a great many engagements, and all sorts of people to call upon. Withers received these directions with becoming deference, and gave his guaranty for their execution; but when he withdrew a pace or two behind her, it appeared as if he couldn't help looking strangely at the major, who couldn't help looking strangely at Mr. Dombey, who couldn't help looking strangely at Cleopatra, who couldn't help nodding her bonnet over one eye, and rattling her knife and fork upon her plate in using them as if she were playing castanets.

Edith alone never lifted her eyes to any face at the table, and never seemed dismayed by anything her mother said or did. She listened to her disjointed talk, or at least, turned her head towards her when addressed; replied in a few low words when necessary; and sometimes stopped her when she was rambling, or brought her thoughts back with a monosyllable, to the point from which they had strayed. The mother, however unsteady

in other things, was constant in this — that she was always observant of her. She would look at the beautiful face, in its marble stillness and severity, now with a kind of fearful admiration; now in a giggling foolish effort to move it to a smile; now with capricious tears and jealous shakings of her head, as imagining herself neglected by it; always with an attraction towards it, that never fluctuated like her other ideas, but had constant possession of her. From Edith she would sometimes look at Florence, and back again at Edith, in a manner that was wild enough; and sometimes she would try to look elsewhere, as if to escape from her daughter's face; but back to it she seemed forced to come, although it never sought hers unless sought, or troubled her with one single glance.

The breakfast concluded, Mrs. Skewton, affecting to lean girlishly upon the major's arm, but heavily supported on the other side by Flowers the maid, and propped up behind by Withers the page, was conducted to the carriage, which was to take her, Florence, and Edith to Brighton.

"And is Joseph absolutely banished?" said the major, thrusting in his purple face over the steps. "Damme, ma'am, is Cleopatra so hard-hearted as to forbid her faithful Antony Bagstock to approach the presence?"

"Go along!" said Cleopatra, "I can't bear you. You shall see me when I come back, if you are very good."

"Tell Joseph, he may live in hope, ma'am," said the major; "or he'll die in despair."

Cleopatra shuddered and leaned back. "Edith, my dear," she said. "Tell him" —

"What?"

"Such dreadful words," said Cleopatra. "He uses such dreadful words!"

Edith signed to him to retire, gave the word to go on, and left the objectionable major to Mr. Dombey. To whom he returned, whistling.

"I'll tell you what, sir," said the major, with his hands behind him, and his legs very wide asunder, "a fair friend of ours has removed to Queer-street."

"What do you mean, major?" inquired Mr. Dombey.

"I mean to say, Dombey," returned the major, "that you'll soon be an orphan-in-law."

Mr. Dombey appeared to relish this waggish description of himself so very little that the major wound up with the horse's cough, as an expression of gravity.

"Damme, sir," said the major, "there is no use in disguising a fact. Joe is blunt, sir. That's his nature. If you take old Josh at all, you take him as you find him; and a de-vilish rusty, old rasper, of a close-toothed, J. B. file, you *do* find him. Dombey," said the major, "your wife's mother is on the move, sir."

"I fear," returned Mr. Dombey, with much philosophy, "that Mrs. Skewton is shaken."

"Shaken, Dombey!" said the major. "Smashed!"

"Change, however," pursued Mr. Dombey, "and attention may do much yet."

"Don't believe it, sir," returned the major. "Damme, sir, she never wrapped up enough. If a man don't wrap up," said the major, taking in another button of his buff waistcoat, "he has nothing to fall back upon. But some people *will* die. They *will* do it. Damme, they *will*. They're obstinate. I tell you what, Dombey, it may not be ornamental; it may not be refined; it may be rough and tough; but a little of the genuine old English Bagstock stamina, sir, would do all the good in the world to the human breed."

After imparting this precious piece of information, the major, who was certainly true-blue, whatever other endowments he may have possessed or wanted, coming within the "genuine old English" classification, which has never been exactly ascertained, took his lobster-eyes and his apoplexy to the club, and choked there all day.

Cleopatra, at one time fretful, at another self-complacent, sometimes awake, sometimes asleep, and at all times juvenile, reached Brighton the same night, fell to pieces as usual, and was put away in bed; where a gloomy fancy might have pictured a more potent skeleton than the maid, who should have been one, watching at the rose-colored curtains, which were carried down to shed their bloom upon her.

It was settled in high council of medical authority that she should take a carriage airing every day, and that it was important she should get out every day and walk if she could. Edith was ready to attend her — always ready to attend her, with the same mechanical attention and immovable beauty — and they drove out alone; for Edith had an uneasiness in the presence of Florence, now that her mother was worse, and told Florence, with a kiss, that she would rather they two went alone.

Mrs. Skewton, on one particular day, was in the irresolute, exacting, jealous temper that had developed itself on her recovery from her first attack. After sitting silent in the carriage watching Edith for some time, she took her hand and kissed it passionately. The hand was neither given nor withdrawn, but simply yielded to her raising of it, and being released, dropped down again, almost as if it were insensible. At this she began to whimper and moan, and say what a mother she

had been, and how she was forgotten! This she continued to do at capricious intervals, even when they had alighted; when she herself was halting along with the joint support of Withers and a stick, and Edith was walking by her side, and the carriage slowly following at a little distance.

It was a bleak, lowering, windy day, and they were out upon the Downs with nothing but a bare sweep of land between them and the sky. The mother, with a querulous satisfaction in the monotony of her complaint, was still repeating it in a low voice from time to time, and the proud form of her daughter moved beside her slowly, when there came advancing over a dark ridge before them, two other figures, which in the distance, were so like an exaggerated imitation of their own, that Edith stopped.

Almost as she stopped, the two figures stopped; and that one which to Edith's thinking was like a distorted shadow of her mother, spoke to the other, earnestly, and with a pointing hand towards them. That one seemed inclined to turn back, but the other, in which Edith recognized enough that was like herself to strike her with an unusual feeling, not quite free from fear, came on; and then they came on together.

The greater part of this observation she made while walking towards them, for her stoppage had been momentary. Nearer observation showed her that they were poorly dressed, as wanderers about the country; that the younger woman carried knitted work or some such goods for sale; and that the old one toiled on empty-handed.

And yet, however far removed she was in dress, in dignity, in beauty, Edith could not but compare the

younger woman with herself, still. It may have been that she saw upon her face some traces which she knew were lingering in her own soul, if not yet written on that index; but, as the woman came on, returning her gaze, fixing her shining eyes upon her, undoubtedly presenting something of her own air and stature, and appearing to reciprocate her own thoughts, she felt a chill creep over her, as if the day were darkening, and the wind were colder.

They had now come up. The old woman holding out her hand importunately, stopped to beg of Mrs. Skewton. The younger one stopped too, and she and Edith looked in one another's eyes.

"What is it that you have to sell?" said Edith.

"Only this," returned the woman, holding out her wares, without looking at them. "I sold myself long ago."

"My lady, don't believe her," croaked the old woman to Mrs. Skewton; "don't believe what she says. She loves to talk like that. She's my handsome and undutiful daughter. She gives me nothing but reproaches, my lady, for all I have done for her. Look at her now, my lady, how she turns upon her poor old mother with her looks."

As Mrs. Skewton drew her purse out with a trembling hand, and eagerly fumbled for some money, which the other old woman greedily watched for — their heads all but touching in their hurry and decrepitude — Edith interposed:

"I have seen you," addressing the old woman, "before."

"Yes, my lady," with a courtesy. "Down in Warwickshire. The morning among the trees. When you

wouldn't give me nothing. But the gentleman *he* give me something! O, bless him, bless him!" mumbled the old woman, holding up her skinny hand, and grinning frightfully at her daughter.

"It's of no use attempting to stay me, Edith!" said Mrs. Skewton, angrily anticipating an objection from her. "You know nothing about it. I won't be dissuaded. I am sure this is an excellent woman, and a good mother."

"Yes, my lady, yes," chattered the old woman, holding out her avaricious hand. "Thankee, my lady. Lord bless you, my lady. Sixpence more, my pretty lady, as a good mother yourself."

"And treated undutifully enough, too, my good old creature, sometimes, I assure you," said Mrs. Skewton, whimpering. "There! Shake hands with me. You're a very good old creature — full of what's-his-name — and all that. You're all affection and et cetera, a'n't you?"

"Oh yes, my lady!"

"Yes, I'm sure you are; and so's that gentlemanly creature Grangeby. I must really shake hands with you again. And now you can go, you know; and I hope," addressing the daughter, "that you'll show more gratitude, and natural what's-its-name, and all the rest of it — but I never *did* remember names — for there never was a better mother than the good old creature's been to you. Come, Edith!"

As the ruin of Cleopatra tottered off whimpering, and wiping its eyes with a gingerly remembrance of rouge in their neighborhood, the old woman hobbled another way, mumbling and counting her money. Not one word more, nor one other gesture, had been ex-

changed between Edith and the younger woman, but neither had removed her eyes from the other for a moment. They had remained confronted until now, when Edith, as awakening from a dream, passed slowly on.

"You're a handsome woman," muttered her shadow, looking after her; "but good looks won't save us. And you're a proud woman; but pride won't save us. We had need to know each other when we meet again!"

CHAPTER XLI.

NEW VOICES IN THE WAVES.

All is going on as it was wont. The waves are hoarse with repetition of their mystery: the dust lies piled upon the shore; the sea-birds soar and hover; the winds and clouds go forth upon their trackless flight; the white arms beckon, in the moonlight, to the invisible country far away.

With a tender melancholy pleasure, Florence finds herself again on the old ground so sadly trodden, yet so happily, and thinks of him in the quiet place, where he and she have many and many a time conversed together, with the water welling up about his couch. And now, as she sits pensive there, she hears in the wild low murmur of the sea, his little story told again, his very words repeated; and finds that all her life and hopes, and griefs, since — in the solitary house, and in the pageant it has changed to — have a portion in the burden of the marvellous song.

And gentle Mr. Toots, who wanders at a distance, looking wistfully towards the figure that he dotes upon, and has followed there, but cannot in his delicacy disturb at such a time, likewise hears the requiem of little Dombey on the waters, rising and falling in the lulls of their eternal madrigal in praise of Florence. Yes! and he faintly understands, poor Mr. Toots, that they are saying

something of a time when he was sensible of being brighter and not addle-brained; and the tears rising in his eyes when he fears that he is dull and stupid now, and good for little but to be laughed at, diminish his satisfaction in their soothing reminder that he is relieved from present responsibility to the Chicken, by the absence of that game head of poultry in the country, training (at Toots's cost) for his great mill with the Larkey Boy.

But Mr. Toots takes courage, when they whisper a kind thought to him; and by slow degrees and with many indecisive stoppages on the way, approaches Florence. Stammering and blushing, Mr. Toots affects amazement when he comes near her, and says (having followed close on the carriage in which she travelled, every inch of the way from London, loving even to be choked by the dust of its wheels) that he never was so surprised in all his life.

"And you've brought Diogenes, too, Miss Dombey!" says Mr. Toots, thrilled through and through by the touch of the small hand so pleasantly and frankly given him.

No doubt Diogenes is there, and no doubt Mr. Toots has reason to observe him, for he comes straightway at Mr. Toots's legs, and tumbles over himself in the desperation with which he makes at him, like a very dog of Montargis. But he is checked by his sweet mistress.

"Down, Di, down. Don't you remember who first made us friends, Di? For shame!"

Oh! Well may Di lay his loving cheek against her hand, and run off, and run back, and run round her, barking, and run headlong at anybody coming by, to show his devotion. Mr. Toots would run headlong at

anybody, too. A military gentleman goes past, and Mr. Toots would like nothing better than to run at him, full tilt.

"Diogenes is quite in his native air, isn't he, Miss Dombey?" says Mr. Toots.

Florence assents, with a grateful smile.

"Miss Dombey," says Mr. Toots, "beg your pardon, but if you would like to walk to Blimber's, I — I'm going there."

Florence puts her arm in that of Mr. Toots without a word, and they walk away together, with Diogenes going on before. Mr. Toots's legs shake under him; and though he is splendidly dressed, he feels misfits, and sees wrinkles, in the masterpieces of Burgess and Co., and wishes he had put on that brightest pair of boots.

Doctor Blimber's house, outside, has as scholastic and studious an air as ever; and up there is the window where she used to look for the pale face, and where the pale face brightened when it saw her, and the wasted little hand waved kisses as she passed. The door is opened by the same weak-eyed young man, whose imbecility of grin at sight of Mr. Toots is feebleness of character personified. They are shown into the doctor's study, where blind Homer and Minerva give them audience as of yore, to the sober ticking of the great clock in the hall; and where the globes stand still in their accustomed places, as if the world were stationary too, and nothing in it ever perished in obedience to the universal law, that, while it keeps it on the roll, calls everything to earth.

And here is Doctor Blimber, with his learned legs; and here is Mrs. Blimber, with her sky-blue cap; and here is Cornelia, with her sandy little row of curls, and

her bright spectacles, still working like a sexton in the graves of languages. Here is the table upon which he sat forlorn and strange, the "new boy" of the school; and hither comes the distant cooing of the old boys, at their old lives in the old room on the old principle!

"Toots!" says Doctor Blimber, "I am very glad to see you, Toots."

Mr. Toots chuckles in reply.

"Also to see you, Toots, in such good company," says Doctor Blimber.

Mr. Toots, with a scarlet visage, explains that he has met Miss Dombey by accident, and that Miss Dombey wishing, like himself, to see the old place, they have come together.

"You will like," says Doctor Blimber, "to step among our young friends, Miss Dombey, no doubt. All fellow-students of yours, Toots, once. I think we have no new disciples in our little portico, my dear," says Doctor Blimber to Cornelia, "since Mr. Toots left us."

"Except Bitherstone," returns Cornelia.

"Ay, truly," says the doctor. "Bitherstone is new to Mr. Toots."

New to Florence, too, almost; for, in the school-room, Bitherstone — no longer Master Bitherstone of Mrs. Pipchin's — shows in collars and a neckcloth, and wears a watch. But Bitherstone, born beneath some Bengal star of ill-omen, is extremely inky; and his lexicon has got so dropsical from constant reference, that it won't shut, and yawns as if it really could not bear to be so bothered. So does Bitherstone its master, forced at Doctor Blimber's highest pressure; but in the yawn of Bitherstone there is malice and snarl, and he has been heard to say that he wishes he could catch "old Blimber"

in India. He'd precious soon find himself carried up the country by a few of his (Bitherstone's) coolies, and handed over to the Thugs; he can tell him that.

Briggs is still grinding in the mill of knowledge; and Toser, too; and Johnson, too; and all the rest; the older pupils being principally engaged in forgetting, with prodigious labor, everything they knew when they were younger. All are as polite and pale as ever; and among them, Mr. Feeder, B. A., with his bony hand and bristly head, is still hard at it: with his Herodotus stop on just at present, and his other barrels on a shelf behind him.

A mighty sensation is created, even among these grave young gentlemen, by a visit from the emancipated Toots; who is regarded with a kind of awe, as one who has passed the Rubicon, and is pledged never to come back, and concerning the cut of whose clothes, and fashion of whose jewelry, whispers go about, behind hands; the bilious Bitherstone, who is not of Mr. Toots's time, affecting to despise the latter to the smaller boys, and saying he knows better, and that he should like to see him coming that sort of thing in Bengal, where his mother has got an emerald belonging to him, that was taken out of the footstool of a rajah. Come now!

Bewildering emotions are awakened also by the sight of Florence, with whom every young gentleman immediately falls in love, again; except, as aforesaid, the bilious Bitherstone, who declines to do so, out of contradiction. Black jealousies of Mr. Toots arise, and Briggs is of opinion that he a'n't so very old after all. But this disparaging insinuation is speedily made nought by Mr. Toots saying aloud to Mr. Feeder, B. A., "How are you, Feeder?" and asking him to come and dine with him

to-day at the Bedford; in right of which feats he might set up as Old Parr, if he chose, unquestioned.

There is much shaking of hands, and much bowing, and a great desire on the part of each young gentleman to take Toots down in Miss Dombey's good graces; and then, Mr. Toots having bestowed a chuckle on his old desk, Florence and he withdraw with Mrs. Blimber and Cornelia; and Doctor Blimber is heard to observe behind them as he comes out last, and shuts the door, "Gentlemen, we will now resume our studies." For that and little else is what the doctor hears the sea say, or has heard it saying all his life.

Florence then steals away and goes up-stairs to the old bedroom with Mrs. Blimber and Cornelia; Mr. Toots, who feels that neither he nor anybody else is wanted there, stands talking to the doctor at the study-door, or rather hearing the doctor talk to him, and wondering how he ever thought the study a great sanctuary, and the doctor, with his round turned legs, like a clerical pianoforte, an awful man. Florence soon comes down and takes leave; Mr. Toots takes leave; and Diogenes, who has been worrying the weak-eyed young man pitilessly all the time, shoots out at the door, and barks a glad defiance down the cliff; while 'Melia, and another of the doctor's female domestics, look out of an upper window, laughing "at that there Toots," and saying of Miss Dombey, "But really though, now — a'n't she like her brother, only prettier?"

Mr. Toots, who saw when Florence came down that there were tears upon her face, is desperately anxious and uneasy, and at first fears that he did wrong in proposing the visit. But he is soon relieved by her saying she is very glad to have been there again, and

by her talking quite cheerfully about it all, as they walked on by the sea. What with the voices there, and her sweet voice, when they come near Mr. Dombey's house, and Mr. Toots must leave her, he is so enslaved that he has not a scrap of free-will left; when she gives him her hand at parting, he cannot let it go.

"Miss Dombey, I beg your pardon," says Mr. Toots, in a sad fluster, "but if you would allow me to — to "—

The smiling and unconscious look of Florence brings him to a dead stop.

"If you would allow me to — if you would not consider it a liberty, Miss Dombey, if I was to — without any encouragement at all, if I was to hope, you know," says Mr. Toots.

Florence looks at him inquiringly.

"Miss Dombey," says Mr. Toots, who feels that he is in for it now, "I really am in that state of adoration of you that I don't know what to do with myself. I am the most deplorable wretch. If it wasn't at the corner of the square at present, I should go down on my knees, and beg and entreat of you, without any encouragement at all, just to let me hope that I may — may think it possible that you "—

"Oh, if you please, don't!" cries Florence, for the moment quite alarmed and distressed. "Oh, pray don't, Mr. Toots. Stop, if you please. Don't say any more. As a kindness and a favor to me, don't."

Mr. Toots is dreadfully abashed, and his mouth opens.

"You have been so good to me," says Florence, "I am so grateful to you, I have such reason to like you for being a kind friend to me, and I do like you so much;" and here the ingenuous face smiles upon him

with the pleasantest look of honesty in the world; "that I am sure you are only going to say good-by!"

"Certainly, Miss Dombey," says Mr. Toots, "I — I — that's exactly what I mean. It's of no consequence."

"Good-by!" cries Florence.

"Good-by, Miss Dombey!" stammers Mr. Toots. "I hope you won't think anything about it. It's — it's of no consequence, thank you. It's not of the least consequence in the world."

Poor Mr. Toots goes home to his hotel in a state of desperation, locks himself into his bedroom, flings himself upon his bed, and lies there for a long time; as if it were of the greatest consequence, nevertheless. But Mr. Feeder, B. A., is coming to dinner, which happens well for Mr. Toots, or there is no knowing when he might get up again. Mr. Toots is obliged to get up to receive him, and to give him hospitable entertainment.

And the generous influence of that social virtue, hospitality (to make no mention of wine and good cheer), opens Mr. Toots's heart, and warms him to conversation. He does not tell Mr. Feeder, B. A., what passed at the corner of the square; but when Mr. Feeder asks him "When it is to come off?" Mr. Toots replies, "that there are certain subjects" — which brings Mr. Feeder down a peg or two immediately. Mr. Toots adds, that he don't know what right Blimber had to notice his being in Miss Dombey's company, and that if he thought he meant impudence by it, he'd have him out, doctor or no doctor; but he supposes it's only his ignorance. Mr. Feeder says he has no doubt of it.

Mr. Feeder, however, as an intimate friend, is not excluded from the subject. Mr. Toots merely requires

that it should be mentioned mysteriously, and with feeling. After a few glasses of wine, he gives Miss Dombey's health, observing, "Feeder, you have no idea of the sentiments with which I propose that toast." Mr. Feeder replies, "Oh yes I have, my dear Toots; and greatly they redound to your honor, old boy." Mr. Feeder is then agitated by friendship, and shakes hands; and says, if ever Toots wants a brother, he knows where to find him, either by post or parcel. Mr. Feeder likewise says, that if he may advise, he would recommend Mr. Toots to learn the guitar, or, at least, the flute; for women like music when you are paying your addresses to 'em, and he has found the advantage of it himself.

This brings Mr. Feeder, B. A., to the confession that he has his eye upon Cornelia Blimber. He informs Mr. Toots that he don't object to spectacles, and that if the doctor were to do the handsome thing and give up the business, why, there they are — provided for. He says it's his opinion that when a man has made a handsome sum by his business, he is bound to give it up; and that Cornelia would be an assistance in it which any man might be proud of. Mr. Toots replies by launching wildly out into Miss Dombey's praises, and by insinuations that sometimes he thinks he should like to blow his brains out. Mr. Feeder strongly urges that it would be a rash attempt, and shows him, as a reconcilement to existence, Cornelia's portrait, spectacles and all.

Thus these quiet spirits pass the evening; and when it has yielded place to night, Mr. Toots walks home with Mr. Feeder, and parts with him at Doctor Blimber's door. But Mr. Feeder only goes up the steps, and when Mr. Toots is gone, comes down again, to stroll upon the beach alone, and think about his prospects.

Mr. Feeder plainly hears the waves informing him, as he loiters along, that Doctor Blimber will give up the business; and he feels a soft romantic pleasure in looking at the outside of the house, and thinking that the doctor will first paint it, and put it into thorough repair.

Mr. Toots is likewise roaming up and down, outside the casket that contains his jewel; and in a deplorable condition of mind, and not unsuspected by the police, gazes at a window where he sees a light, and which he has no doubt is Florence's. But it is not, for that is Mrs. Skewton's room; and while Florence, sleeping in another chamber, dreams lovingly, in the midst of the old scenes, and their old associations live again, the figure which in grim reality is substituted for the patient boy's on the same theatre, once more to connect it — but how differently! — with decay and death, is stretched there, wakeful and complaining. Ugly and haggard it lies upon its bed of unrest; and by it, in the terror of her unimpassioned loveliness — for it *has* terror in the sufferer's failing eyes — sits Edith. What do the waves say, in the stillness of the night to them!

"Edith, what is that stone arm raised to strike me. Don't you see it?"

"There is nothing, mother, but your fancy."

"But my fancy! Everything is my fancy. Look! Is it possible that you don't see it!"

"Indeed, mother, there is nothing. Should I sit unmoved, if there were any such thing there?"

"Unmoved?" looking wildly at her — "it's gone now — and why are you so unmoved? That is not my fancy, Edith. It turns me cold to see you sitting at my side."

"I am sorry, mother."

"Sorry! You seem always sorry. But it is not for me!"

With that, she cries; and tossing her restless head from side to side upon her pillow, runs on about neglect, and the mother she has been, and the mother the good old creature was, whom they met, and the cold return the daughters of such mothers make. In the midst of her incoherence, she stops, looks at her daughter, cries out that her wits are going, and hides her face upon the bed.

Edith, in compassion, bends over her and speaks to her. The sick old woman clutches her round the neck, and says, with a look of horror,

"Edith! we are going home soon; going back. You mean that I shall go home again?"

"Yes mother, yes."

"And what he said — what's his name, I never could remember names — major — that dreadful word, when we came away — it's not true? Edith!" with a shriek and a stare, "it's not *that* that is the matter with me."

Night after night, the light burns in the window, and the figure lies upon the bed, and Edith sits beside it, and the restless waves are calling to them both the whole night long. Night after night, the waves are hoarse with repetition of their mystery; the dust lies piled upon the shore; the sea-birds soar and hover; the winds and clouds are on their trackless flight; the white arms beckon, in the moonlight, to the invisible country far away.

And still the sick old woman looks into the corner, where the stone arm — part of a figure of some tomb, she says — is raised to strike her. At last it falls; and

then a dumb old woman lies upon the bed, and she is crooked, and shrunk up, and half of her is dead.

Such is the figure, painted and patched for the sun to mock, that is drawn slowly through the crowd from day to day, looking, as it goes, for the good old creature who was such a mother, and making mouths as it peers among the crowd in vain. Such is the figure that is often wheeled down to the margin of the sea, and stationed there; but on which no wind can blow freshness, and for which the murmur of the ocean has no soothing word. She lies and listens to it by the hour; but its speech is dark and gloomy to her, and a dread is on her face, and when her eyes wander over the expanse, they see but a broad stretch of desolation between earth and heaven.

Florence she seldom sees, and when she does, is angry with and mows at. Edith is beside her always, and keeps Florence away; and Florence, in her bed at night, trembles at the thought of death in such a shape, and often wakes and listens, thinking it has come. No one attends on her but Edith. It is better that few eyes should see her; and her daughter watches alone by the bedside.

A shadow even on that shadowed face, a sharpening even of the sharpened features, and a thickening of the veil before the eyes into a pall that shuts out the dim world, is come. Her wandering hands upon the coverlet join feebly palm to palm, and move towards her daughter; and a voice not like hers, not like any voice that speaks our mortal language — says "For I nursed you!"

Edith, without a tear, kneels down to bring her voice closer to the sinking head, and answers:

"Mother, can you hear me?"

Staring wide, she tries to nod in answer.

"Can you recollect the night before I married?"

The head is motionless, but it expresses somehow that she does.

"I told you then that I forgave your part in it, and prayed God to forgive my own. I told you that the past was at an end between us. I say so now, again. Kiss me, mother."

Edith touches the white lips, and for a moment all is still. A moment afterwards, her mother, with her girlish laugh, and the skeleton of the Cleopatra manner, rises in her bed.

Draw the rose-colored curtains. There is something else upon its flight besides the wind and clouds. Draw the rose-colored curtains close!

Intelligence of the event is sent to Mr. Dombey in town, who waits upon Cousin Feenix (not yet able to make up his mind for Baden-Baden), who has just received it too. A good-natured creature like Cousin Feenix is the very man for a marriage or a funeral, and his position in the family renders it right that he should be consulted.

"Dombey," says Cousin Feenix, "upon my soul, I am very much shocked to see you on such a melancholy occasion. My poor aunt! She was a devilish lively woman."

Mr. Dombey replies, "Very much so."

"And made up," says Cousin Feenix, "really young, you know, considering. I am sure, on the day of your marriage, I thought she was good for another twenty years. In point of fact, I said so to a man at Brooks's — little Billy Joper — you know him, no doubt — man with a glass in his eye?"

Mr. Dombey bows a negative. "In reference to the obsequies," he hints, "whether there is any suggestion" —

"Well, upon my life," says Cousin Feenix, stroking his chin, which he has just enough of hand below his wristbands to do; "I really don't know. There's a Mausoleum down at my place, in the park, but I'm afraid it's in bad repair, and, in point of fact, in a devil of a state. But for being a little out at elbows, I should have had it put to rights; but I believe the people come and make pic-nic parties there inside the iron railings."

Mr. Dombey is clear that this won't do.

"There's an uncommon good church in the village," says Cousin Feenix, thoughtfully; "pure specimen of the Anglo-Norman style, and admirably well sketched too by Lady Jane Finchbury — woman with tight stays —but they've spoilt it with whitewash, I understand, and it's a long journey."

"Perhaps Brighton itself," Mr. Dombey suggests.

"Upon my honor, Dombey, I don't think we could do better," says Cousin Feenix. "It's on the spot, you see, and a very cheerful place."

"And when," hints Mr. Dombey, "would it be convenient?"

"I shall make a point," says Cousin Feenix, "of pledging myself for any day you think best. I shall have great pleasure (melancholy pleasure, of course) in following my poor aunt to the confines of the —— in point of fact, to the grave," says Cousin Feenix, failing in the other turn of speech.

"Would Monday do for leaving town?" says Mr. Dombey.

"Monday would suit me to perfection," replies Cousin Feenix. Therefore Mr. Dombey arranges to take Cousin Feenix down on that day, and presently takes his leave, attended to the stairs by Cousin Feenix, who says, at parting, "I'm really excessively sorry, Dombey, that you should have so much trouble about it;" to which Mr. Dombey answers, "Not at all."

At the appointed time, Cousin Feenix and Mr. Dombey meet, and go down to Brighton, and representing, in their two selves, all the other mourners for the deceased lady's loss, attend her remains to their place of rest. Cousin Feenix, sitting in the mourning-coach, recognizes innumerable acquaintances on the road, but takes no other notice of them, in decorum, than checking them off aloud, as they go by, for Mr. Dombey's information, as "Tom Johnson. Man with cork leg, from White's. What are *you* here, Tommy? Foley on a blood mare. The Smalder girls" — and so forth. At the ceremony Cousin Feenix is depressed, observing, that these are the occasions to make a man think, in point of fact, that he is getting shaky; and his eyes are really moistened, when it is over. But he soon recovers; and so do the rest of Mrs. Skewton's relatives and friends, of whom the major continually tells the club that she never did wrap up enough; while the young lady with the back, who has so much trouble with her eyelids, says, with a little scream, that she must have been enormously old, and that she died of all kinds of horrors, and you mustn't mention it.

So Edith's mother lies unmentioned of her dear friends, who are deaf to the waves that are hoarse with repetition of their mystery, and blind to the dust that is piled upon the shore, and to the white arms that are beckoning, in

the moonlight, to the invisible country far away. But all goes on, as it was wont, upon the margin of the unknown sea; and Edith standing there alone, and listening to its waves, has dank weed cast up at her feet, to strew her path in life withal.

CHAPTER XLII.

CONFIDENTIAL AND ACCIDENTAL.

ATTIRED no more in Captain Cuttle's sable slops and sou'-wester hat, but dressed in a substantial suit of brown livery, which, while it affected to be a very sober and demure livery indeed, was really as self-satisfied and confident a one as tailor need desire to make, Rob the Grinder, thus transformed as to his outer man, and all regardless within of the captain and the Midshipman, except when he devoted a few minutes of his leisure time to crowing over those inseparable worthies, and recalling, with much applauding music from that brazen instrument, his conscience, the triumphant manner in which he had disembarrassed himself of their company, now served his patron, Mr. Carker. Inmate of Mr. Carker's house, and serving about his person, Rob kept his round eyes on the white teeth with fear and trembling, and felt that he had need to open them wider than ever.

He could not have quaked more, through his whole being, before the teeth, though he had come into the service of some powerful enchanter, and they had been his strongest spells. The boy had a sense of power and authority in this patron of his that engrossed his whole attention and exacted his most implicit submission and obedience. He hardly considered himself safe in thinking about him when he was absent, lest he should feel

himself immediately taken by the throat again, as on the morning when he first became bound to him, and should see every one of the teeth finding him out, and taxing him with every fancy of his mind. Face to face with him, Rob had no more doubt that Mr. Carker read his secret thoughts, or that he could read them by the least exertion of his will if he were so inclined, than he had that Mr. Carker saw him when he looked at him. The ascendancy was so complete, and held him in such enthralment, that, hardly daring to think at all, but with his mind filled with a constantly dilating impression of his patron's irresistible command over him, and power of doing anything with him, he would stand watching his pleasure, and trying to anticipate his orders, in a state of mental suspension, as to all other things.

Rob had not informed himself perhaps — in his then state of mind it would have been an act of no common temerity to inquire — whether he yielded so completely to this influence in any part, because he had floating suspicions of his patron's being a master of certain treacherous arts in which he had himself been a poor scholar at the Grinders' School. But certainly Rob admired him, as well as feared him. Mr. Carker, perhaps, was better acquainted with the sources of his power, which lost nothing by his management of it.

On the very night when he left the captain's service, Rob, after disposing of his pigeons, and even making a bad bargain in his hurry, had gone straight down to Mr. Carker's house, and hotly presented himself before his new master with a glowing face that seemed to expect commendation.

"What, scapegrace!" said Mr. Carker, glancing at his bundle. "Have you left your situation and come to me?"

"Oh if you please, sir," faltered Rob, "you said, you know, when I come here last" —

"*I* said," returned Mr. Carker, "what did I say?"

"If you please, sir, you didn't say nothing at all, sir," returned Rob, warned by the manner of this inquiry, and very much disconcerted.

His patron looked at him with a wide display of gums, and shaking his forefinger, observed:

"You'll come to an evil end, my vagabond friend, I foresee. There's ruin in store for you."

"Oh if you please, don't, sir!" cried Rob, with his legs trembling under him. "I'm sure, sir, I only want to work for you, sir, and to wait upon you, sir, and to do faithful whatever I'm bid, sir."

"You had better do faithfully whatever you are bid," returned his patron, "if you have anything to do with me."

"Yes, I know that, sir," pleaded the submissive Rob; "I'm sure of that, sir. If you'll only be so good as try me, sir! And if ever you find me out, sir, doing anything against your wishes, I give you leave to kill me."

"You dog!" said Mr. Carker, leaning back in his chair, and smiling at him serenely. "That's nothing to what I'd do to you, if you tried to deceive me."

"Yes, sir," replied the abject Grinder, "I'm sure you would be down upon me dreadful, sir. I wouldn't attempt for to go and do it, sir, not if I was bribed with golden guineas."

Thoroughly checked in his expectation of commendation, the crest-fallen Grinder stood looking at his patron, and vainly endeavoring not to look at him, with the uneasiness which a cur will often manifest in a similar situation.

"So you have left your old service, and come here to ask me to take you into mine, eh?" said Mr. Carker.

"Yes, if you please, sir," returned Rob, who, in doing so, had acted on his patron's own instructions, but dared not justify himself by the least insinuation to that effect.

"Well!" said Mr. Carker. "You know me, boy?"

"Please, sir, yes, sir," returned Rob, fumbling with his hat, and still fixed by Mr. Carker's eye, and fruitlessly endeavoring to unfix himself.

Mr. Carker nodded. "Take care then!"

Rob expressed in a number of short bows his lively understanding of this caution, and was bowing himself back to the door, greatly relieved by the prospect of getting on the outside of it, when his patron stopped him.

"Halloa!" he cried, calling him roughly back. "You have been — shut that door."

Rob obeyed as if his life had depended on his alacrity.

"You have been used to eavesdropping. Do you know what that means?"

"Listening, sir?" Rob hazarded, after some embarrassed reflection.

His patron nodded. "And watching, and so forth."

"I wouldn't do such a thing here, sir," answered Rob; "upon my word and honor, I wouldn't, sir, I wish I may die if I would, sir, for anything that could be promised to me. I should consider it as much as all the world was worth, to offer to do such a thing, unless I was ordered, sir."

"You had better not. You have been used, too, to babbling and tattling," said his patron, with perfect coolness. "Beware of that here, or you're a lost rascal,"

and he smiled again, and again cautioned him with his forefinger.

The Grinder's breath came short and thick with consternation. He tried to protest the purity of his intentions, but could only stare at the smiling gentleman in a stupor of submission, with which the smiling gentleman seemed well enough satisfied, for he ordered him downstairs, after observing him for some moments in silence, and gave him to understand that he was retained in his employment.

This was the manner of Rob the Grinder's engagement by Mr. Carker, and his awe-stricken devotion to that gentleman had strengthened and increased, if possible, with every minute of his service.

It was a service of some months' duration, when early one morning, Rob opened the garden-gate to Mr. Dombey, who was come to breakfast with his master, by appointment. At the same moment his master himself came, hurrying forth to receive the distinguished guest, and give him welcome with all his teeth.

"I never thought," said Carker, when he had assisted him to alight from his horse, "to see you here, I'm sure. This is an extraordinary day in my calendar. No occasion is very special to a man like you, who may do anything; but to a man like me, the case is widely different."

"You have a tasteful place here, Carker," said Mr. Dombey, condescending to stop upon the lawn, to look about him.

"You can afford to say so," returned Carker. "Thank you."

"Indeed," said Mr. Dombey, in his lofty patronage, "any one might say so. As far as it goes, it is a very commodious and well-arranged place — quite elegant."

"As far as it goes, truly," returned Carker, with an air of disparagement. "It wants that qualification. Well! we have said enough about it; and though you can afford to praise it, I thank you none the less. Will you walk in?"

Mr. Dombey, entering the house, noticed, as he had reason to do, the complete arrangement of the rooms, and the numerous contrivances for comfort and effect that abounded there. Mr. Carker, in his ostentation of humility, received this notice with a deferential smile, and said he understood its delicate meaning, and appreciated it, but in truth the cottage was good enough for one in his position — better, perhaps, than such a man should occupy, poor as it was.

"But perhaps to you, who are so far removed, it really does look better than it is," he said, with his false mouth distended to its fullest stretch. "Just as monarchs imagine attractions in the lives of beggars."

He directed a sharp glance and a sharp smile at Mr. Dombey as he spoke, and a sharper glance, and a sharper smile yet, when Mr. Dombey, drawing himself up before the fire, in the attitude so often copied by his second in command, looked round at the pictures on the walls. Cursorily as his cold eye wandered over them, Carker's keen glance accompanied his, and kept pace with his, marking exactly where it went, and what it saw. As it rested on one picture in particular, Carker hardly seemed to breathe, his sidelong scrutiny was so catlike and vigilant, but the eye of his great chief passed from that, as from the others, and appeared no more impressed by it than by the rest.

Carker looked at it — it was the picture that resembled Edith — as if it were a living thing; and with

a wicked, silent laugh upon his face, that seemed in part addressed to it, though it was all derisive of the great man standing so unconscious beside him. Breakfast was soon set upon the table: and, inviting Mr. Dombey to a chair which had its back towards this picture, he took his own seat opposite to it as usual.

Mr. Dombey was even graver than it was his custom to be, and quite silent. The parrot, swinging in the gilded hoop within her gaudy cage, attempted in vain to attract notice, for Carker was too observant of his visitor to heed her; and the visitor, abstracted in meditation, looked fixedly, not to say sullenly, over his stiff neck-cloth, without raising his eyes from the table-cloth. As to Rob, who was in attendance, all his faculties and energies were so locked up in observation of his master, that he scarcely ventured to give shelter to the thought that the visitor was the great gentleman before whom he had been carried as a certificate of the family health, in his childhood, and to whom he had been indebted for his leather smalls.

"Allow me," said Carker, suddenly, "to ask how Mrs. Dombey is?"

He leaned forward obsequiously, as he made the inquiry, with his chin resting on his hand; and at the same time his eyes went up to the picture, as if he said to it, "Now, see, how I will lead him on!"

Mr. Dombey reddened as he answered:

"Mrs. Dombey is quite well. You remind me, Carker, of some conversation that I wish to have with you."

"Robin, you can leave us," said his master, at whose mild tones Robin started and disappeared, with his eyes fixed on his patron to the last. "You don't remember that boy, of course?" he added, when the immeshed Grinder was gone.

"No," said Mr. Dombey, with magnificent indifference.

"Not likely that a man like you would. Hardly possible," murmured Carker. "But he is one of that family from whom you took a nurse. Perhaps you may remember having generously charged yourself with his education?"

"Is it that boy?" said Mr. Dombey, with a frown. "He does little credit to his education, I believe."

"Why, he is a young rip, I am afraid," returned Carker, with a shrug. "He bears that character. But the truth is, I took him into my service because, being able to get no other employment, he conceived (had been taught at home, I dare say) that he had some sort of claim upon you, and was constantly trying to dog your heels with his petition. And although my defined and recognized connection with your affairs is merely of a business character, still I have that spontaneous interest in everything belonging to you, that" —

He stopped again, as if to discover whether he had led Mr. Dombey far enough yet. And again, with his chin resting on his hand, he leered at the picture.

"Carker," said Mr. Dombey, "I am sensible that you do not limit your" —

"Service," suggested his smiling entertainer.

"No; I prefer to say your regard," observed Mr. Dombey; very sensible, as he said so, that he was paying him a handsome and flattering compliment, "to our mere business relations. Your consideration for my feelings, hopes, and disappointments, in the little instance you have just now mentioned, is an example in point. I am obliged to you, Carker."

Mr. Carker bent his head slowly, and very softly

rubbed his hands, as if he were afraid by any action to disturb the current of Mr. Dombey's confidence.

"Your allusion to it is opportune," said Mr. Dombey, after a little hesitation, "for it prepares the way to what I was beginning to say to you, and reminds me that that involves no absolutely new relations between us, although it may involve more personal confidence on my part than I have hitherto" —

"Distinguished me with," suggested Carker, bending his head again: "I will not say to you how honored I am; for a man like you well knows how much honor he has in his power to bestow at pleasure."

"Mrs. Dombey and myself," said Mr. Dombey, passing this compliment with august self-denial, "are not quite agreed upon some points. We do not appear to understand each other yet. Mrs. Dombey has something to learn."

"Mrs. Dombey is distinguished by many rare attractions; and has been accustomed, no doubt, to receive much adulation," said the smooth, sleek watcher of his slightest look and tone. "But where there is affection, duty, and respect, any little mistakes engendered by such causes are soon set right."

Mr. Dombey's thoughts instinctively flew back to the face that had looked at him in his wife's dressing-room, when an imperious hand was stretched towards the door; and remembering the affection, duty, and respect, expressed in it, he felt the blood rush to his own face quite as plainly as the watchful eyes upon him saw it there.

"Mrs. Dombey and myself," he went on to say, "had some discussion, before Mrs. Skewton's death, upon the causes of my dissatisfaction; of which you will have

formed a general understanding from having been a witness of what passed between Mrs. Dombey and myself on the evening when you were at our — at my house."

"When I so much regretted being present," said the smiling Carker. "Proud as a man in my position necessarily must be of your familiar notice — though I give you no credit for it; you may do anything you please without losing caste — and honored as I was by an early presentation to Mrs. Dombey, before she was made eminent by bearing your name, I almost regretted that night, I assure you, that I had been the object of such especial good fortune."

That any man could, under any possible circumstances, regret the being distinguished by his condescension and patronage, was a moral phenomenon which Mr. Dombey could not comprehend. He therefore responded, with a considerable accession of dignity. "Indeed! And why, Carker?"

"I fear," returned the confidential agent, "that Mrs. Dombey, never very much disposed to regard me with favorable interest — one in my position could not expect that, from a lady naturally proud, and whose pride becomes her so well — may not easily forgive my innocent part in that conversation. Your displeasure is no light matter, you must remember; and to be visited with it before a third party" —

"Carker," said Mr. Dombey, arrogantly; "I presume that *I* am the first consideration?"

"Oh! Can there be a doubt about it?" replied the other, with the impatience of a man admitting a notorious and incontrovertible fact.

"Mrs. Dombey becomes a secondary consideration,

when we are both in question, I imagine," said Mr. Dombey. "Is that so?"

"Is it so?" returned Carker. "Do you know better than any one, that you have no need to ask?"

"Then I hope, Carker," said Mr. Dombey, "that your regret in the acquisition of Mrs. Dombey's displeasure, may be almost counterbalanced by your satisfaction in retaining *my* confidence and good opinion."

"I have the misfortune, I find," returned Carker, "to have incurred that displeasure. Mrs. Dombey has expressed it to you?"

"Mrs. Dombey has expressed various opinions," said Mr. Dombey, with majestic coldness and indifference, "in which I do not participate, and which I am not inclined to discuss, or to recall. I made Mrs. Dombey acquainted, some time since, as I have already told you, with certain points of domestic deference and submission on which I felt it necessary to insist. I failed to convince Mrs. Dombey of the expediency of her immediately altering her conduct in those respects, with a view to her own peace and welfare, and my dignity; and I informed Mrs. Dombey that if I should find it necessary to object or remonstrate again, I should express my opinion to her through yourself, my confidential agent."

Blended with the look that Carker bent upon him, was a devilish look at the picture over his head, that struck upon it like a flash of lightning.

"Now, Carker," said Mr. Dombey, "I do not hesitate to say to you that I *will* carry my point. I am not to be trifled with. Mrs. Dombey must understand that my will is law, and that I cannot allow of one exception to the whole rule of my life. You will have the goodness to undertake this charge, which, coming from me, is not

unacceptable to you, I hope, whatever regret you may politely profess — for which I am obliged to you on behalf of Mrs. Dombey; and you will have the goodness, I am persuaded, to discharge it as exactly as any other commission."

"You know," said Mr. Carker, "that you have only to command me."

"I know," said Mr. Dombey, with a majestic indication of assent, "that I have only to command you. It is necessary that I should proceed in this. Mrs. Dombey is a lady undoubtedly highly qualified, in many respects, to" —

"To do credit even to your choice," suggested Carker, with a fawning show of teeth.

"Yes; if you please to adopt that form of words," said Mr. Dombey, in his tone of state; "and at present I do not conceive that Mrs. Dombey does that credit to it, to which it is entitled. There is a principle of opposition in Mrs. Dombey that must be eradicated; that must be overcome: Mrs. Dombey does not appear to understand," said Mr. Dombey, forcibly, "that the idea of opposition to Me is monstrous and absurd."

"We, in the City, know you better," replied Carker, with a smile from ear to ear.

"You know me better," said Mr. Dombey. "I hope so. Though, indeed, I am bound to do Mrs. Dombey the justice of saying, however inconsistent it may seem with her subsequent conduct (which remains unchanged), that on my expressing my disapprobation and determination to her, with some severity, on the occasion to which I have referred, my admonition appeared to produce a very powerful effect." Mr. Dombey delivered himself of those words with most portentous stateliness.

"I wish you to have the goodness, then, to inform Mrs. Dombey, Carker, from me, that I must recall our former conversation to her remembrance, in some surprise that it has not yet had its effect. That I must insist upon her regulating her conduct by the injunctions laid upon her in that conversation. That I am not satisfied with her conduct. That I am greatly dissatisfied with it. And that I shall be under the very disagreeable necessity of making you the bearer of yet more unwelcome and explicit communications, if she has not the good sense and the proper feeling to adapt herself to my wishes, as the first Mrs. Dombey did, and, I believe I may add, as any other lady in her place would."

"The first Mrs. Dombey lived very happily," said Carker.

"The first Mrs. Dombey had great good sense," said Mr. Dombey, in a gentlemanly toleration of the dead, "and very correct feeling."

"Is Miss Dombey like her mother, do you think?" said Carker.

Swiftly and darkly, Mr. Dombey's face changed. His confidential agent eyed it keenly.

"I have approached a painful subject," he said, in a soft regretful tone of voice, irreconcilable with his eager eye. "Pray forgive me. I forget these chains of association in the interest I have. Pray forgive me."

But for all he said, his eager eye scanned Mr. Dombey's downcast face none the less closely; and then it shot a strange triumphant look at the picture, as appealing to it to bear witness how he led him on again, and what was coming.

"Carker," said Mr. Dombey, looking here and there upon the table, and speaking in a somewhat altered and

more hurried voice, and with a paler lip, "there is no occasion for apology. You mistake. The association is with the matter in hand, and not with any recollection, as you suppose. I do not approve of Mrs. Dombey's behavior towards my daughter."

"Pardon me," said Mr. Carker, "I don't quite understand."

"Understand then," returned Mr. Dombey, "that you may make that — that you *will* make that, if you please — matter of direct objection from me to Mrs. Dombey. You will please to tell her that her show of devotion for my daughter is disagreeable to me. It is likely to be noticed. It is likely to induce people to contrast Mrs. Dombey in her relation towards my daughter, with Mrs. Dombey in her relation towards myself. You will have the goodness to let Mrs. Dombey know, plainly, that I object to it; and that I expect her to defer, immediately, to my objection. Mrs. Dombey may be in earnest, or she may be pursuing a whim, or she may be opposing me; but I object to it in any case, and in every case. If Mrs. Dombey is in earnest, so much the less reluctant should she be to desist; for she will not serve my daughter by any such display. If my wife has any superfluous gentleness, and duty over and above her proper submission to me, she may bestow them where she pleases, perhaps; but I will have submission first! — Carker," said Mr. Dombey, checking the unusual emotion with which he had spoken, and falling into a tone more like that in which he was accustomed to assert his greatness, "you will have the goodness not to omit or slur this point, but to consider it a very important part of your instructions."

Mr. Carker bowed his head, and rising from the table,

and standing thoughtfully before the fire, with his hand to his smooth chin, looked down at Mr. Dombey with the evil slyness of some monkish carving, half human and half brute; or like a leering face on an old water-spout. Mr. Dombey, recovering his composure by degrees, or cooling his emotion in his sense of having taken a high position, sat gradually stiffening again, and looking at the parrot as she swung to and fro, in her great wedding-ring.

"I beg your pardon," said Carker, after a silence, suddenly resuming his chair, and drawing it opposite to Mr. Dombey's, "but let me understand. Mrs. Dombey is aware of the probability of your making me the organ of your displeasure?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Dombey. "I have said so."

"Yes," rejoined Carker, quickly; "but why?"

"Why!" Mr. Dombey repeated, not without hesitation. "Because I told her."

"Ay," replied Carker. "But why did you tell her? You see," he continued with a smile, and softly laying his velvet hand, as a cat might have laid its sheathed claws, on Mr. Dombey's arm; "if I perfectly understand what is in your mind, I am so much more likely to be useful, and to have the happiness of being effectually employed. I think I *do* understand. I have not the honor of Mrs. Dombey's good opinion. In my position, I have no reason to expect it; but I take the fact to be, that I have not got it?"

"Possibly not," said Mr. Dombey.

"Consequently," pursued Carker, "your making these communications to Mrs. Dombey through me, is sure to be particularly unpalatable to that lady?"

"It appears to me," said Mr. Dombey, with haughty

reserve, and yet with some embarrassment, "that Mrs. Dombey's views upon the subject form no part of it as it presents itself to you and me, Carker. But it may be so."

"And — pardon me — do I misconceive you," said Carker, "when I think you descry in this, a likely means of humbling Mrs. Dombey's pride — I use the word as expressive of a quality which, kept within due bounds, adorns and graces a lady so distinguished for her beauty and accomplishments — and, not to say of punishing her, but of reducing her to the submission you so naturally and justly require?"

"I am not accustomed, Carker, as you know," said Mr. Dombey, "to give such close reasons for any course of conduct I think proper to adopt, but I will gainsay nothing of this. If you have any objection to found upon it, that is indeed another thing, and the mere statement that you have one will be sufficient. But I have not supposed, I confess, that any confidence I could intrust to you, would be likely to degrade you" —

"Oh! *I* degraded!" exclaimed Carker. "In *your* service!"

"— or to place you," pursued Mr. Dombey, "in a false position."

"*I* in a false position!" exclaimed Carker. "I shall be proud — delighted — to execute your trust. I could have wished, I own, to have given the lady at whose feet I would lay my humble duty and devotion — for is she not your wife! — no new cause of dislike; but a wish from you is, of course, paramount to every other consideration on earth. Besides, when Mrs. Dombey is converted from these little errors of judgment, incidental, I would presume to say, to the novelty of her situation,

I shall hope that she will perceive in the slight part I take, only a grain — my removed and different sphere gives room for little more — of the respect for you, and sacrifice of all considerations to you, of which it will be her pleasure and privilege to garner up a great store every day."

Mr. Dombey seemed, at the moment, again to see her with her hand stretched out towards the door, and again to hear through the mild speech of his confidential agent an echo of the words, "Nothing can make us stranger to each other than we are henceforth!" But he shook off the fancy, and did not shake in his resolution, and said, "Certainly, no doubt."

"There is nothing more," quoth Carker, drawing his chair back to its old place — for they had taken little breakfast as yet — and pausing for an answer before he sat down.

"Nothing," said Mr. Dombey, "but this. You will be good enough to observe, Carker, that no message to Mrs. Dombey with which you are or may be charged, admits of reply. You will be good enough to bring me no reply. Mrs. Dombey is informed that it does not become me to temporize or treat upon any matter that is at issue between us, and that what I say is final."

Mr. Carker signified his understanding of these credentials, and they fell to breakfast with what appetite they might. The Grinder also, in due time, reappeared, keeping his eyes upon his master without a moment's respite, and passing the time in a revery of worshipful terror. Breakfast concluded, Mr. Dombey's horse was ordered out again, and Mr. Carker mounting his own, they rode off for the City together.

Mr. Carker was in capital spirits, and talked much.

Mr. Dombey received his conversation with the sovereign air of a man who had a right to be talked to, and occasionally condescended to throw in a few words to carry on the conversation. So they rode on characteristically enough. But Mr. Dombey, in his dignity, rode with very long stirrups, and a very loose rein, and very rarely deigned to look down to see where his horse went. In consequence of which it happened that Mr. Dombey's horse, while going at a round trot stumbled on some loose stones, threw him, rolled over him, and lashing out with his iron-shod feet, in his struggles to get up, kicked him.

Mr. Carker, quick of eye, steady of hand, and a good horseman, was afoot, and had the struggling animal upon his legs and by the bridle, in a moment. Otherwise that morning's confidence would have been Mr. Dombey's last. Yet even with the flush and hurry of this action red upon him, he bent over his prostrate chief with every tooth disclosed, and muttered as he stooped down, "I have given good cause of offence to Mrs. Dombey *now*, if she knew it!"

Mr. Dombey being insensible, and bleeding from the head and face, was carried by certain menders of the road, under Carker's direction, to the nearest public-house, which was not far off, and where he was soon attended by divers surgeons, who arrived in quick succession from all parts, and who seemed to come by some mysterious instinct, as vultures are said to gather about a camel who dies in the desert. After being at some pains to restore him to consciousness, these gentlemen examined into the nature of his injuries. One surgeon who lived hard by was strong for a compound fracture of the leg, which was the landlord's opinion also; but two surgeons who lived at a distance, and were only in

that neighborhood by accident, combated this opinion so disinterestedly, that it was decided at last that the patient, though severely cut and bruised, had broken no bones but a lesser rib or so, and might be carefully taken home before night. His injuries being dressed and bandaged, which was a long operation, and he at length left to repose, Mr. Carker mounted his horse again, and rode away to carry the intelligence home.

Crafty and cruel as his face was at the best of times, though it was a sufficiently fair face as to form and regularity of feature, it was at its worst when he set forth on this errand ; animated by the craft and cruelty of thoughts within him, suggestions of remote possibility rather than of design or plot, that made him ride as if he hunted men and women. Drawing rein at length, and slackening in his speed, as he came into the more public roads, he checked his white-legged horse into picking his way along as usual, and hid himself beneath his sleek, hushed, crouching manner, and his ivory smile, as he best could.

He rode direct to Mr. Dombey's house, alighted at the door, and begged to see Mrs. Dombey on an affair of importance. The servant who showed him to Mr. Dombey's own room, soon returned to say that it was not Mrs. Dombey's hour for receiving visitors, and that he begged pardon for not having mentioned it before.

Mr. Carker, who was quite prepared for a cold reception, wrote upon a card that he must take the liberty of pressing for an interview, and that he would not be so bold as to do so, *for the second time* (this he underlined), if he were not equally sure of the occasion being sufficient for his justification. After a trifling delay, Mrs. Dombey's maid appeared, and conducted him to a morn-

ing room up-stairs, where Edith and Florence were together.

He had never thought Edith half so beautiful before. Much as he admired the graces of her face and form, and freshly as they dwelt within his sensual remembrance, he had never thought her half so beautiful.

Her glance fell haughtily upon him in the door-way; but he looked at Florence — though only in the act of bending his head, as he came in — with some irrepressible expression of the new power he held; and it was his triumph to see the glance droop and falter, and to see that Edith half rose up to receive him.

He was very sorry, he was deeply grieved; he couldn't say with what unwillingness he came to prepare her for the intelligence of a very slight accident. He entreated Mrs. Dombey to compose herself. Upon his sacred word of honor, there was no cause of alarm. But Mr. Dombey —

Florence uttered a sudden cry. He did not look at her, but at Edith. Edith composed and reassured her. *She* uttered no cry of distress. No, no.

Mr. Dombey had met with an accident in riding. His horse had slipped, and he had been thrown.

Florence wildly exclaimed that he was badly hurt; that he was killed!

No. Upon his honor, Mr. Dombey, though stunned at first, was soon recovered, and though certainly hurt was in no kind of danger. If this were not the truth, he, the distressed intruder, never could have had the courage to present himself before Mrs. Dombey. It was the truth indeed, he solemnly assured her.

All this he said as if he were answering Edith, and

not Florence, and with his eyes and his smile fastened on Edith.

He then went on to tell her where Mr. Dombey was lying, and to request that a carriage might be placed at his disposal to bring him home.

"Mama," faltered Florence in tears, "If I might venture to go!"

Mr. Carker, having his eyes on Edith when he heard these words, gave her a secret look and slightly shook his head. He saw how she battled with herself before she answered him with her handsome eyes, but he wrested the answer from her — he showed her that he would have it, or that he would speak and cut Florence to the heart — and she gave it to him. As he had looked at the picture in the morning, so he looked at her afterwards, when she turned her eyes away.

"I am directed to request," he said, "that the new house-keeper — Mrs. Pipchin, I think, is the name" —

Nothing escaped him. He saw, in an instant, that she was another slight of Mr. Dombey's on his wife.

— "may be informed that Mr. Dombey wishes to have his bed prepared in his own apartments down-stairs, as he prefers those rooms to any other. I shall return to Mr. Dombey almost immediately. That every possible attention has been paid to his comfort, and that he is the object of every possible solicitude, I need not assure you, madam. Let me again say, there is no cause for the least alarm. Even you may be quite at ease, believe me."

He bowed himself out, with his extremest show of deference and conciliation; and having returned to Mr. Dombey's room, and there arranged for a carriage being sent after him to the City, mounted his horse again, and

rode slowly thither. He was very thoughtful as he went along, and very thoughtful there, and very thoughtful in the carriage on his way back to the place where Mr. Dombey had been left. It was only when sitting by that gentleman's couch that he was quite himself again, and conscious of his teeth.

About the time of twilight, Mr. Dombey, grievously afflicted with aches and pains, was helped into his carriage, and propped with cloaks and pillows on one side of it, while his confidential agent bore him company upon the other. As he was not to be shaken, they moved at little more than a foot pace; and hence it was quite dark when he was brought home. Mrs. Pipchin, bitter and grim, and not oblivious of the Peruvian mines, as the establishment in general had good reason to know, received him at the door, and freshened the domestics with several little sprinklings of wordy vinegar, while they assisted in conveying him to his room. Mr. Carker remained in attendance until he was safe in bed, and then, as he declined to receive any female visitor, but the excellent Ogress who presided over his household, waited on Mrs. Dombey once more, with his report on her lord's condition.

He again found Edith alone with Florence, and he again addressed the whole of his soothing speech to Edith, as if she were a prey to the liveliest and most affectionate anxieties. So earnest he was in his respectful sympathy, that, on taking leave, he ventured — with one more glance towards Florence at the moment — to take her hand, and bending over it, to touch it with his lips.

Edith did not withdraw the hand, nor did she strike his fair face with it, despite the flush upon her cheek,

the bright light in her eyes, and the dilation of her whole form. But when she was alone in her own room, she struck it on the marble chimney-shelf, so that, at one blow, it was bruised, and bled; and held it from her, near the shining fire, as if she could have thrust it in and burned it.

Far into the night she sat alone, by the sinking blaze, in dark and threatening beauty, watching the murky shadows looming on the wall, as if her thoughts were tangible, and cast them there. Whatever shapes of outrage and affront, and black foreshadowings of things that might happen, flickered, indistinct and giant-like, before her, one resented figure marshalled them against her. And that figure was her husband.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE WATCHES OF THE NIGHT.

Florence, long since awakened from her dream, mournfully observed the estrangement between her father and Edith, and saw it widen more and more, and knew that there was greater bitterness between them every day. Each day's added knowledge deepened the shade upon her love and hope, roused up the old sorrow that had slumbered for a little time, and made it even heavier to bear than it had been before.

It had been hard — how hard may none but Florence ever know! — to have the natural affection of a true and earnest nature turned to agony; and slight, or stern repulse, substituted for the tenderest protection and the dearest care. It had been hard to feel in her deep heart what she had felt, and never know the happiness of one touch of response. But it was much more hard to be compelled to doubt either her father or Edith, so affectionate and dear to her, and to think of her love for each of them, by turns, with fear, distrust, and wonder.

Yet Florence now began to do so; and the doing of it was a task imposed upon her by the very purity of her soul, as one she could not fly from. She saw her father cold and obdurate to Edith, as to her; hard, inflexible, unyielding. Could it be, she asked herself with

starting tears, that her own dear mother had been made unhappy by such treatment, and had pined away and died? Then she would think how proud and stately Edith was to every one but her, with what disdain she treated him, how distantly she kept apart from him, and what she had said on the night when she came home; and quickly it would come on Florence, almost as a crime, that she loved one who was set in opposition to her father, and that her father knowing of it, must think of her in his solitary room as the unnatural child who added this wrong to the old fault, so much wept for, of never having won his fatherly affection from her birth. The next kind word from Edith, the next kind glance, would shake these thoughts again, and make them seem like black ingratitude; for who but she had cheered the drooping heart of Florence, so lonely and so hurt, and been its best of comforters! Thus, with her gentle nature yearning to them both, feeling the misery of both, and whispering doubts of her own duty to both, Florence in her wider and expanded love, and by the side of Edith, endured more, than when she had hoarded up her undivided secret in the mournful house, and her beautiful mama had never dawned upon it.

One exquisite unhappiness that would have far outweighed this, Florence was spared. She never had the least suspicion that Edith by her tenderness for her widened the separation from her father, or gave him new cause of dislike. If Florence had conceived the possibility of such an effect being wrought by such a cause, what grief she would have felt, what sacrifice she would have tried to make, poor loving girl, how fast and sure her quiet passage might have been beneath it to the presence of that higher Father who does not re-

ject his children's love, or spurn their tried and broken hearts, Heaven knows! But it was otherwise, and that was well.

No word was ever spoken between Florence and Edith now, on these subjects. Edith had said there ought to be between them, in that wise, a division and a silence like the grave itself: and Florence felt that she was right.

In this state of affairs her father was brought home suffering and disabled: and gloomily retired to his own rooms, where he was tended by servants, not approached by Edith, and had no friend or companion but Mr. Carker, who withdrew near midnight.

"And nice company *he* is, Miss Floy," said Susan Nipper. "Oh, he's a precious piece of goods! If ever he wants a character don't let him come to me whatever he does, that's all I tell him."

"Dear Susan," urged Florence, "don't!"

"Oh it's very well to say 'don't' Miss Floy," returned the Nipper, much exasperated; "but raly begging your pardon we're coming to such passes that it turns all the blood in a person's body into pins and needles, with their pints all ways. Don't mistake me, Miss Floy, I don't mean nothing again your ma-in-law who has always treated me as a lady should though she is rather high I must say, not that I have any right to object to that particular, but when we come to Mrs. Pipchinses and having them put over us and keeping guard at your pa's door like crocodiles (only make us thankful that they lay no eggs!) we are growing too outrageous!"

"Papa thinks well of Mrs. Pipchin, Susan," returned Florence, "and has a right to choose his house-keeper, you know. Pray don't!"

"Well, Miss Floy," returned the Nipper, "when you say don't, I never do I hope, but Mrs. Pipchin acts like early gooseberries upon me miss, and nothing less."

Susan was unusually emphatic and destitute of punctuation in her discourse on this night, which was the night of Mr. Dombey's being brought home, because, having been sent down-stairs by Florence to inquire after him, she had been obliged to deliver her message to her mortal enemy Mrs. Pipchin; who, without carrying it in to Mr. Dombey had taken upon herself to return what Miss Nipper called a huffish answer, on her own responsibility. This, Susan Nipper construed into presumption on the part of that exemplary sufferer by the Peruvian mines, and a deed of disparagement upon her young lady, that was not to be forgiven; and so far her emphatic state was special. But she had been in a condition of greatly increased suspicion and distrust, ever since the marriage; for, like most persons of her quality of mind, who form a strong and sincere attachment to one in the different station which Florence occupied, Susan was very jealous, and her jealousy naturally attached to Edith, who divided her old empire, and came between them. Proud and glad as Susan Nipper truly was, that her young mistress should be advanced towards her proper place in the scene of her old neglect, and that she should have her father's handsome wife for her companion and protectress, she could not relinquish any part of her own dominion to the handsome wife, without a grudge and a vague feeling of ill-will, for which she did not fail to find a disinterested justification in her sharp perception of the pride and passion of the lady's character. From the background to which she had

necessarily retired somewhat, since the marriage, Miss Nipper looked on, therefore, at domestic affairs in general, with a resolute conviction that no good would come of Mrs. Dombey; always being very careful to publish on all possible occasions, that she had nothing to say against her.

"Susan," said Florence, who was sitting thoughtfully at her table, "it is very late. I shall want nothing more to-night."

"Ah, Miss Floy!" returned the Nipper, "I'm sure I often wish for them old times when I sat up with you hours later than this and fell asleep through being tired out when you was as broad awake as spectacles, but you've ma's-in-law to come and sit with you now, Miss Floy and I'm thankful for it I'm sure. I've not a word to say against 'em."

"I shall not forget who was my old companion when I had none, Susan," returned Florence, gently, "never!" And looking up, she put her arm round the neck of her humble friend, drew her face down to hers, and bidding her good-night, kissed it; which so mollified Miss Nipper, that she fell a-sobbing.

"Now my dear Miss Floy," said Susan, "let me go down-stairs again and see how your pa is, I know you're wretched about him, do let me go down-stairs again and knock at his door my own self."

"No," said Florence, "go to bed. We shall hear more in the morning. I will inquire myself in the morning. Mama has been down, I dare say;" Florence blushed, for she had no such hope; "or is there now, perhaps. Good-night!"

Susan was too much softened to express her private opinion on the probability of Mrs. Dombey's being in

attendance on her husband; and silently withdrew. Florence, left alone, soon hid her head upon her hands as she had often done in other days, and did not restrain the tears from coursing down her face. The misery of this domestic discord and unhappiness; the withered hope she cherished now, if hope it could be called, of ever being taken to her father's heart; her doubts and fears between the two; the yearning of her innocent breast to both; the heavy disappointment and regret of such an end as this, to what had been a vision of bright hope and promise to her; all crowded on her mind and made her tears flow fast. Her mother and her brother dead, her father unmoved towards her, Edith opposed to him and casting him away, but loving her, and loved by her, it seemed as if her affection could never prosper, rest where it would. That weak thought was soon hushed, but the thoughts in which it had arisen were too true and strong to be dismissed with it; and they made the night desolate.

Among such reflections there rose up, as there had risen up all day, the image of her father, wounded and in pain, alone in his own room, untended by those who should be nearest to him, and passing the tardy hours in lonely suffering. A frightened thought which made her start and clasp her hands — though it was not a new one in her mind — that he might die, and never see her or pronounce her name, thrilled her whole frame. In her agitation she thought, and trembled while she thought of once more stealing down-stairs, and venturing to his door.

She listened at her own. The house was quiet, and all the lights were out. It was a long, long time, she thought, since she used to make her nightly pilgrimages

to his door! It was a long, long time, she tried to think, since she had entered his room at midnight, and he had led her back to the stair-foot!

With the same child's heart within her, as of old: even with the child's sweet timid eyes and clustering hair: Florence as strange to her father in her early maiden bloom, as in her nursery time, crept down the staircase, listening as she went, and drew near to his room. No one was stirring in the house. The door was partly open to admit air; and all was so still within, that she could hear the burning of the fire, and count the ticking of the clock that stood upon the chimney-piece.

She looked in. In that room, the house-keeper wrapped in a blanket was fast asleep in an easy-chair before the fire. The doors between it and the next were partly closed, and a screen was drawn before them; but there was a light there, and it shone upon the cornice of his bed. All was so very still that she could hear from his breathing that he was asleep. This gave her courage to pass round the screen, and look into his chamber.

It was as great a start to come upon his sleeping face as if she had not expected to see it. Florence stood arrested on the spot, and if he had awakened then, must have remained there.

There was a cut upon his forehead, and they had been wetting his hair, which lay bedabbled and entangled on the pillow. One of his arms, resting outside the bed, was bandaged up, and he was very white. But it was not this, that after the first quick glance, and first assurance of his sleeping quietly, held Florence rooted to the ground. It was something very different from this, and more than this, that made him look so solemn in her eyes.

She had never seen his face in all her life, but there had been upon it — or she fancied so — some disturbing consciousness of her. She had never seen his face in all her life, but hope had sunk within her, and her timid glance had drooped before its stern, unloving, and repelling harshness. As she looked upon it now, she saw it, for the first time, free from the cloud that had darkened her childhood. Calm, tranquil night, was reigning in its stead. He might have gone to sleep, for anything she saw there, blessing her.

Awake, unkind father! Awake now, sullen man! The time is flitting by; the hour is coming with an angry tread. Awake!

There was no change upon his face; and as she watched it, awfully, its motionless repose recalled the faces that were gone. So they looked, so would he; so she, his weeping child, who should say when! so all the world of love and hatred and indifference around them! When that time should come, it would not be the heavier to him, for this that she was going to do; and it might fall something lighter upon her.

She stole close to the bed, and drawing in her breath, bent down, and softly kissed him on the face, and laid her own for one brief moment by its side, and put the arm, with which she dared not touch him, round about him on the pillow.

Awake, doomed man, while she is near! The time is flitting by; the hour is coming with an angry tread; its foot is in the house. Awake!

In her mind, she prayed to God to bless her father, and to soften him towards her, if it might be so; and if not, to forgive him if he was wrong, and pardon her the prayer, which almost seemed impiety. And doing so,

and looking back at him with blinded eyes, and stealing timidly away, passed out of his room, and crossed the other, and was gone.

He may sleep on now. He may sleep on while he may. But let him look for that slight figure when he wakes, and find it near him when the hour is come!

Sad and grieving was the heart of Florence, as she crept up-stairs. The quiet house had grown more dismal since she came down. The sleep she had been looking on, in the dead of night, had the solemnity to her of death and life in one. The secrecy and silence of her own proceeding made the night secret, silent, and oppressive. She felt unwilling, almost unable, to go on to her own chamber; and turning into the drawing-rooms, where the clouded moon was shining through the blinds, looked out into the empty streets.

The wind was blowing drearily. The lamps looked pale, and shook as if they were cold. There was a distant glimmer of something that was not quite darkness, rather than of light, in the sky; and foreboding night was shivering and restless, as the dying are who make a troubled end. Florence remembered how, as a watcher, by a sick bed, she had noted this bleak time, and felt its influence, as if in some hidden natural antipathy to it; and now it was very, very gloomy.

Her mama had not come to her room that night, which was one cause of her having sat late out of her bed. In her general uneasiness, no less than in her ardent longing to have somebody to speak to, and to break this spell of gloom and silence, Florence directed her steps towards the chamber where she slept.

The door was not fastened within, and yielded smoothly to her hesitating hand. She was surprised to find a

bright light burning; still more surprised, on looking in, to see that her mama, but partially undressed, was sitting near the ashes of the fire, which had crumbled and dropped away. Her eyes were intently bent upon the air; and in their light, and in her face, and in her form, and in the grasp with which she held the elbows of her chair as if about to start up, Florence saw such fierce emotion that it terrified her.

"Mama!" she cried, "what is the matter!"

Edith started; looking at her with such a strange dread in her face, that Florence was more frightened than before.

"Mama!" said Florence, hurriedly advancing. "Dear mama! what is the matter!"

"I have not been well," said Edith, shaking, and still looking at her in the same strange way. "I have had bad dreams, my love."

"And not yet been to bed, mama?"

"No," she returned. "Half-waking dreams."

Her features gradually softened; and suffering Florence to come close to her, within her embrace, she said in a tender manner, "But what does my bird do here! What does my bird do here!"

"I have been uneasy, mama, in not seeing you to-night, and in not knowing how papa was; and I"—

Florence stopped there, and said no more.

"Is it late?" asked Edith, fondly putting back the curls that mingled with her own dark hair, and strayed upon her face.

"Very late. Near day."

"Near day!" she repeated in surprise.

"Dear mama, what have you done to your hand?" said Florence.

Edith drew it suddenly away, and, for a moment, looked at her with the same strange dread (there was a sort of wild avoidance in it) as before; but she presently said, "Nothing, nothing. A blow." And then she said, "My Florence!" And then her bosom heaved, and she was weeping passionately.

"Mama!" said Florence. "Oh mama, what can I do, what should I do, to make us happier? Is there anything?"

"Nothing," she replied.

"Are you sure of that? Can it never be? If I speak now of what is in my thoughts, in spite of what we have agreed," said Florence, "you will not blame me, will you?"

"It is useless," she replied, "useless. I have told you, dear, that I have had bad dreams. Nothing can change them, or prevent their coming back."

"I do not understand," said Florence, gazing on her agitated face, which seemed to darken as she looked.

"I have dreamed," said Edith in a low voice, "of a pride that is all powerless for good, all powerful for evil; of a pride that has been galled and goaded, through many shameful years, and has never recoiled, except upon itself; a pride that has debased its owner with the consciousness of deep humiliation, and never helped its owner boldly to resent it or avoid it, or to say, 'This shall not be!' a pride that, rightly guided, might have led perhaps to better things, but which, misdirected and perverted, like all else belonging to the same possessor, has been self-contempt, mere hardihood and ruin."

She neither looked nor spoke to Florence now, but went on as if she were alone.

"I have dreamed," she said, "of such indifference and

callousness, arising from this self-contempt; this wretched, inefficient, miserable pride; that it has gone on with listless steps even to the altar, yielding to the old, familiar, beckoning finger, — oh mother, oh mother! — while it spurned it; and willing to be hateful to itself for once and for all, rather than to be stung daily in some new form. Mean, poor thing!"

And now with gathering and darkening emotion, she looked as she had looked when Florence entered.

"And I have dreamed," she said, "that in a first late effort to achieve a purpose, it has been trodden on, and trodden down by a base foot, but turns and looks upon him. I have dreamed that it is wounded, hunted, set upon by dogs, but that it stands at bay, and will not yield; no, that it cannot if it would; but that it is urged on to hate him, rise against him, and defy him!"

Her clinched hand tightened on the trembling arm she had in hers, and as she looked down on the alarmed and wondering face, her own subsided. "Oh Florence!" she said, "I think I have been nearly mad to-night!" and humbled her proud head upon her neck, and wept again.

"Don't leave me! be near me! I have no hope but in you!" These words she said a score of times.

Soon she grew calmer, and was full of pity for the tears of Florence, and for her waking at such untimely hours. And the day now dawning, Edith folded her in her arms and laid her down upon her bed, and, not lying down herself, sat by her, and bade her try to sleep.

"For you are weary, dearest, and unhappy, and should rest."

"I am indeed unhappy, dear mama, to-night," said Florence. "But you are weary and unhappy, too."

"Not when you lie asleep so near me, sweet."

They kissed each other, and Florence, worn out, gradually fell into a gentle slumber; but as her eyes closed on the face beside her, it was so sad to think upon the face down-stairs, that her hand drew closer to Edith for some comfort; yet, even in the act, it faltered, lest it should be deserting him. So, in her sleep, she tried to reconcile the two together, and to show them that she loved them both, but could not do it, and her waking grief was part of her dreams.

Edith, sitting by, looked down at the dark eyelashes lying wet on the flushed cheeks, and looked with gentleness and pity, for she knew the truth. But no sleep hung upon her own eyes. As the day came on she still sat watching and waking, with the placid hand in hers, and sometimes whispered, as she looked at the hushed face, "Be near me, Florence, I have no hope but in you!"

CHAPTER XLIV.

A SEPARATION.

With the day, though not so early as the sun, uprose Miss Susan Nipper. There was a heaviness in this young maiden's exceedingly sharp black eyes, that abated somewhat of their sparkling, and suggested — which was not their usual character — the possibility of their being sometimes shut. There was likewise a swollen look about them, as if they had been crying overnight. But the Nipper, so far from being cast down, was singularly brisk and bold, and all her energies appeared to be braced up for some great feat. This was noticeable even in her dress, which was much more tight and trim than usual; and in occasional twitches of her head as she went about the house, which were mightily expressive of determination.

In a word, she had formed a determination, and an aspiring one: it being nothing less than this — to penetrate to Mr. Dombey's presence, and have speech of that gentleman alone. "I have often said I would," she remarked, in a threatening manner, to herself, that morning, with many twitches of her head, "and now I *will!*"

Spurring herself on to the accomplishment of this desperate design, with a sharpness that was peculiar to herself, Susan Nipper haunted the hall and staircase during the whole forenoon, without finding a favorable

opportunity for the assault. Not at all baffled by this discomfiture, which indeed had a stimulating effect, and put her on her mettle, she diminished nothing of her vigilance; and at last discovered, towards evening, that her sworn foe Mrs. Pipchin, under pretence of having sat up all night, was dozing in her own room, and that Mr. Dombey was lying on his sofa, unattended.

With a twitch — not of her head merely, this time, but of her whole self — the Nipper went on tiptoe to Mr. Dombey's door, and knocked. "Come in!" said Mr. Dombey. Susan encouraged herself with a final twitch, and went in.

Mr. Dombey, who was eying the fire, gave an amazed look at his visitor, and raised himself a little on his arm. The Nipper dropped a courtesy.

"What do you want?" said Mr. Dombey.

"If you please, sir, I wish to speak to you," said Susan.

Mr. Dombey moved his lips as if he were repeating the words, but he seemed so lost in astonishment at the presumption of the young woman as to be incapable of giving them utterance.

"I have been in your service, sir," said Susan Nipper, with her usual rapidity, "now twelve year a-waiting on Miss Floy my own young lady who couldn't speak plain when I first come here and I was old in this house when Mrs. Richards was new, I may not be Meethosalem, but I am not a child in arms."

Mr. Dombey, raised upon his arm, and looking at her, offered no comment on this preparatory statement of facts.

"There never was a dearer or a blesseder young lady than is my young lady, sir," said Susan, "and I ought

to know a great deal better than some for I have seen her in her grief and I have seen her in her joy (there's not been much of it) and I have seen her with her brother and I have seen her in her loneliness and some have never seen her, and I say to some and all — I do!" and here the black-eyed shook her head, and slightly stamped her foot; "that she's the blessedest and dearest angel is Miss Floy that ever drew the breath of life, the more that I was torn to pieces sir the more I'd say it though I may not be a Fox's Martyr."

Mr. Dombey turned yet paler than his fall had made him, with indignation and astonishment; and kept his eyes upon the speaker as if he accused them, and his ears too, of playing him false.

"No one could be anything but true and faithful to Miss Floy, sir," pursued Susan, "and I take no merit for my service of twelve year, for I love her — yes, I say to some and all I do!" — and here the black-eyed shook her head again, and slightly stamped her foot again, and checked a sob; "but true and faithful service gives me right to speak I hope, and speak I must and will now, right or wrong."

"What do you mean, woman!" said Mr. Dombey, glaring at her. "How do you dare?"

"What I mean, sir, is to speak respectful and without offence, but out, and how I dare I know not but I do!" said Susan. "Oh! you don't know my young lady sir you don't indeed, you'd never know so little of her, if you did."

Mr. Dombey, in a fury, put his hand out for the bell-rope; but there was no bell-rope on that side of the fire, and he could not rise and cross to the other without assistance. The quick eye of the Nipper detected his

helplessness immediately, and now, as she afterwards observed, she felt she had got him.

"Miss Floy," said Susan Nipper, "is the most devoted and most patient and most dutiful and beautiful of daughters, there a'n't no gentleman, no sir, though as great and rich as all the greatest and richest of England put together, but might be proud of her and would and ought. If he knew her value right, he'd rather lose his greatness and his fortune piece by piece and beg his way in rags from door to door, I say to some and all, he would!" cried Susan Nipper, bursting into tears, "than bring the sorrow on her tender heart that I have seen it suffer in this house!"

"Woman," cried Mr. Dombey, "leave the room."

"Begging your pardon, not even if I am to leave the situation, sir," replied the steadfast Nipper, "in which I have been so many years and seen so much — although I hope you'd never have the heart to send me from Miss Floy for such a cause — will I go now till I have said the rest, I may not be a Indian widow sir and I am not and I would not so become but if I once made up my mind to burn myself alive, I'd do it! And I've made my mind up to go on."

Which was rendered no less clear by the expression of Susan Nipper's countenance, than by her words.

"There a'n't a person in your service, sir," pursued the black-eyed, "that has always stood more in awe of you than me and you may think how true it is when I make so bold as say that I have hundreds and hundreds of times thought of speaking to you and never been able to make my mind up to it till last night, but last night decided of me."

Mr. Dombey, in a paroxysm of rage, made another

grasp at the bell-rope that was not there, and, in its absence, pulled his hair rather than nothing.

"I have seen," said Susan Nipper, "Miss Floy strive and strive when nothing but a child so sweet and patient that the best of women might have copied from her, I've seen her sitting nights together half the night through to help her delicate brother with his learning, I've seen her helping him and watching him at other times — some well know when — I've seen her, with no encouragement and no help, grow up to be a lady, thank God! that is the grace and pride of every company she goes in, and I've always seen her cruelly neglected and keenly feeling of it — I say to some and all, I have! — and never said one word, but ordering one's self lowly and reverently towards one's betters, is not to be a worshipper of graven images, and I will and must speak!"

"Is there anybody there!" cried Mr. Dombey, calling out. "Where are the men? where are the women! Is there no one there!"

"I left my dear young lady out of bed late last night," said Susan, nothing checked, "and I knew why, for you was ill sir and she didn't know how ill and that was enough to make her wretched as I saw it did. — I may not be a peacock; but I have my eyes — and I sat up a little in my own room, thinking she might be lonesome and might want me, and I saw her steal down-stairs and come to this door as if it was a guilty thing to look at her own pa, and then steal back again and go into them lonely drawing-rooms, a-crying so, that I could hardly bear to hear it. I *cannot* bear to hear it," said Susan Nipper, wiping her black eyes, and fixing them undauntedly on Mr. Dombey's infuriated face. "It's not the first time I have heard it, not by many and many

a time you don't know your own daughter, sir, you don't know what you're doing, sir, I say to some and all," cried Susan Nipper, in a final burst, "that it's a sinful shame!"

"Why, hoity, toity!" cried the voice of Mrs. Pipchin, as the black bombazine garments of that fair Peruvian Miner swept into the room. "What's this, indeed!"

Susan favored Mrs. Pipchin with a look she had invented expressly for her when they first became acquainted, and resigned the reply to Mr. Dombey.

"What's this!" repeated Mr. Dombey almost foaming. "What's this, madam? You who are at the head of this household, and bound to keep it in order, have reason to inquire. Do you know this woman?"

"I know very little good of her, sir," croaked Mrs. Pipchin. "How dare you come here, you hussy? Go along with you!"

But the inflexible Nipper, merely honoring Mrs. Pipchin with another look, remained.

"Do you call it managing this establishment, madam," said Mr. Dombey, "to leave a person like this at liberty to come and talk to *me!* A gentleman — in his own house — in his own room — assailed with the impertinences of women servants!"

"Well sir," returned Mrs. Pipchin, with vengeance in her hard gray eye, "I exceedingly deplore it: nothing can be more irregular; nothing can be more out of all bounds and reason; but I regret to say, sir, that this young woman is quite beyond control. She has been spoiled by Miss Dombey, and is amenable to nobody. You know you're not," said Mrs. Pipchin, sharply, and

shaking her head at Susan Nipper. "For shame, you hussy! Go along with you!"

"If you find people in my service who are not to be controlled, Mrs. Pipchin," said Mr. Dombey, turning back towards the fire, "you know what to do with them, I presume. You know what you are here for? Take her away!"

"Sir, I know what to do," retorted Mrs. Pipchin, "and of course shall do it. Susan Nipper," snapping her up particularly short, "a month's warning from this hour."

"Oh indeed!" cried Susan, loftily.

"Yes," returned Mrs. Pipchin, "and don't smile at me, you minx, or I'll know the reason why! Go along with you this minute!"

"I intend to go this minute, you may rely upon it," said the voluble Nipper. "I have been in this house waiting on my young lady a dozen year and I won't stop in it one hour under notice from a person owning to the name of Pipchin, trust me, Mrs. P."

"A good riddance of bad rubbish!" said that wrathful old lady. "Get along with you, or I'll have you carried out!"

"My comfort is," said Susan, looking back at Mr. Dombey, "that I have told a piece of truth this day which ought to have been told long before and can't be told too often or too plain and that no amount of Pipchinses — I hope the number of 'em mayn't be great" (here Mrs. Pipchin uttered a very sharp "Go along with you!" and Miss Nipper repeated the look) "can unsay what I have said, though they gave a whole year full of warnings beginning at ten o'clock in the forenoon and never leaving off till twelve at night

and died of the exhaustion which would be a Jubilee!"

With these words, Miss Nipper preceded her foe out of the room; and walking up-stairs to her own apartment in great state, to the choking exasperation of the ireful Pipchin, sat down among her boxes and began to cry.

From this soft mood she was soon aroused, with a very wholesome and refreshing effect, by the voice of Mrs. Pipchin outside the door.

"Does that bold-faced slut," said the fell Pipchin, "intend to take her warning, or does she not?"

Miss Nipper replied from within that the person described did not inhabit that part of the house, but that her name was Pipchin, and she was to be found in the house-keeper's room.

"You saucy baggage!" retorted Mrs. Pipchin, rattling at the handle of the door. "Go along with you this minute. Pack up your things directly! How dare you talk in this way to a gentlewoman who has seen better days?"

To which Miss Nipper rejoined from her castle, that she pitied the better days that had seen Mrs. Pipchin; and that for her part she considered the worst days in the year to be about that lady's mark, except that they were much too good for her.

"But you needn't trouble yourself to make a noise at my door," said Susan Nipper, "nor to contaminate the key-hole with your eye, I'm packing up and going you may take your affidavit."

The Dowager expressed her lively satisfaction at this intelligence, and with some general opinions upon young hussies as a race, and especially upon their demerits after

being spoiled by Miss Dombey, withdrew to prepare the Nipper's wages. Susan then bestirred herself to get her trunks in order, that she might take an immediate and dignified departure ; sobbing heartily all the time, as she thought of Florence.

The object of her regret was not long in coming to her, for the news soon spread over the house that Susan Nipper had had a disturbance with Mrs. Pipchin, and that they had both appealed to Mr. Dombey, and that there had been an unprecedented piece of work in Mr. Dombey's room, and that Susan was going. The latter part of this confused rumor, Florence found to be so correct, that Susan had locked the last trunk and was sitting upon it with her bonnet on, when she came into her room.

"Susan!" cried Florence. "Going to leave me! You!"

"Oh for goodness gracious sake, Miss Floy," said Susan sobbing, "don't speak a word to me or I shall demean myself before them Pi-i-pchinses, and I wouldn't have 'em see me cry Miss Floy for worlds!"

"Susan!" said Florence. "My dear girl, my old friend! What shall I do without you! Can you bear to go away so?"

"No-n-o-o, my darling dear Miss Floy, I can't indeed," sobbed Susan. "But it can't be helped, I've done my duty, miss, I have indeed. It's no fault of mine. I am quite resi-igned. I couldn't stay my month or I could never leave you then my darling and I must at last as well as at first, don't speak to me Miss Floy, for though I'm pretty firm I'm not a marble door-post, my own dear."

"What is it! Why is it?" said Florence. "Won't you tell me?" For Susan was shaking her head.

"No-n-no, my darling," returned Susan. "Don't ask me, for I mustn't, and whatever you do don't put in a word for me to stop, for it couldn't be and you'd only wrong yourself, and as God bless you my own precious and forgive me any harm I have done, or any temper I have showed in all these many years!"

With which entreaty, very heartily delivered, Susan hugged her mistress in her arms.

"My darling there's a many that may come to serve you and be glad to serve you and who'll serve you well and true," said Susan, "but there can't be one who'll serve you so affectionate as me or love you half as dearly, that's my comfort. Go-ood-by, sweet Miss Floy!"

"Where will you go, Susan?" asked her weeping mistress.

"I've got a brother down in the country miss — a farmer in Essex," said the heart-broken Nipper, "that keeps ever so many co-o-ows and pigs and I shall go down there by the coach and sto-op with him, and don't mind me, for I've got money in the Savings' Banks my dear, and needn't take another service just yet, which I couldn't, couldn't, couldn't do, my heart's own mistress!" Susan finished with a burst of sorrow, which was opportunely broken by the voice of Mrs. Pipchin talking down-stairs; on hearing which, she dried her red and swollen eyes, and made a melancholy feint of calling jauntily to Mr. Towlinson to fetch a cab and carry down her boxes.

Florence, pale and hurried and distressed, but withheld from useless interference even here, by her dread of causing any new division between her father and his wife (whose stern, indignant face had been a warning

to her a few moments since), and by her apprehension of being in some way unconsciously connected already with the dismissal of her old servant and friend, followed, weeping, down-stairs to Edith's dressing-room, whither Susan betook herself to make her parting courtesy.

"Now, here's the cab, and here's the boxes, get along with you, do!" said Mrs. Pipchin, presenting herself at the same moment. "I beg your pardon, ma'am, but Mr. Dombey's orders are imperative."

Edith, sitting under the hands of her maid — she was going out to dinner — preserved her haughty face, and took not the least notice.

"There's your money," said Mrs. Pipchin, who, in pursuance of her system, and in recollection of the Mines, was accustomed to rout the servants about, as she had routed her young Brighton boarders; to the everlasting acidulation of Master Bitherstone, "and the sooner this house sees your back the better."

Susan had no spirits even for the look that belonged to Mrs. Pipchin by right; so she dropped her courtesy to Mrs. Dombey (who inclined her head without one word, and whose eye avoided every one but Florence), and gave one last parting hug to her young mistress, and received her parting embrace in return. Poor Susan's face at this crisis, in the intensity of her feelings and the determined suffocation of her sobs, lest one should become audible and be a triumph to Mrs. Pipchin, presented a series of the most extraordinary physiognomical phenomena ever witnessed.

"I beg your pardon, miss, I'm sure," said Towlinson, outside the door with the boxes, addressing Florence, "but Mr. Toots is in the dining-room, and sends his

compliments, and begs to know how Diogenes and master is."

Quick as thought, Florence glided out and hastened down-stairs, where Mr. Toots, in the most splendid vestments, was breathing very hard with doubt and agitation on the subject of her coming.

"Oh, how de do, Miss Dombey," said Mr. Toots, "God bless my soul!"

This last ejaculation was occasioned by Mr. Toots's deep concern at the distress he saw in Florence's face: which caused him to stop short in a fit of chuckles, and become an image of despair.

"Dear Mr. Toots," said Florence, "you are so friendly to me, and so honest, that I am sure I may ask a favor of you."

"Miss Dombey," returned Mr. Toots, "if you'll only name one, you'll — you'll give me an appetite. To which," said Mr. Toots, with some sentiment, "I have long been a stranger."

"Susan, who is an old friend of mine, the oldest friend I have," said Florence, "is about to leave here suddenly, and quite alone, poor girl. She is going home, a little way into the country. Might I ask you to take care of her until she is in the coach?"

"Miss Dombey," returned Mr. Toots, "you really do me an honor and a kindness. This proof of your confidence, after the manner in which I was Beast enough to conduct myself at Brighton"—

"Yes," said Florence, hurriedly — "no — don't think of that. Then would you have the kindness to — to go? and to be ready to meet her when she comes out? Thank you a thousand times! You ease my mind so much. She doesn't seem so desolate. You cannot think

how grateful I feel to you, or what a good friend I am sure you are!" And Florence in her earnestness thanked him again and again; and Mr. Toots in *his* earnestness, hurried away — but backwards, that he might lose no glimpse of her.

Florence had not the courage to go out, when she saw poor Susan in the hall, with Mrs. Pipchin driving her forth, and Diogenes jumping about her, and terrifying Mrs. Pipchin to the last degree by making snaps at her bombazine skirts, and howling with anguish at the sound of her voice — for the good duenna was the dearest and most cherished aversion of his breast. But she saw Susan shake hands with the servants all round, and turn once to look at her old home; and she saw Diogenes bound out after the cab, and want to follow it, and testify an impossibility of conviction that he had no longer any property in the fare; and the door was shut, and the hurry over, and her tears flowed fast for the loss of an old friend, whom no one could replace. No one. No one.

Mr. Toots, like the leal and trusty soul he was, stopped the cabriolet in a twinkling, and told Susan Nipper of his commission, at which she cried more than before.

"Upon my soul and body!" said Mr. Toots, taking his seat beside her, "I feel for you. Upon my word and honor I think you can hardly know your own feelings better than I imagine them. I can conceive nothing more dreadful than to have to leave Miss Dombey."

Susan abandoned herself to her grief now, and it really was touching to see her.

"I say," said Mr. Toots, "now, don't! at least I mean now do, you know!"

"Do what, Mr. Toots?" cried Susan.

"Why, come home to my place, and have some dinner before you start," said Mr. Toots. "My cook's a most respectable woman — one of the most motherly people I ever saw — and she'll be delighted to make you comfortable. Her son," said Mr. Toots, as an additional recommendation, "was educated in the Blue-coat School, and blown up in a powder-mill."

Susan accepting this kind offer, Mr. Toots conducted her to his dwelling, where they were received by the matron in question who fully justified his character of her, and by the Chicken who at first supposed, on seeing a lady in the vehicle, that Mr. Dombey had been doubled up, agreeably to his old recommendation, and Miss Dombey abducted. This gentleman awakened in Miss Nipper some considerable astonishment; for, having been defeated by the Larkey boy, his visage was in a state of such great dilapidation, as to be hardly presentable in society with comfort to the beholders. The Chicken himself attributed this punishment to his having had the misfortune to get into Chancery early in the proceedings, when he was severely fibbed by the Larkey one, and heavily grassed. But it appeared from the published records of that great contest that the Larkey boy had had it all his own way from the beginning, and that the Chicken had been tapped, and bunged, and had received pepper, and had been made groggy, and had come up piping, and had endured a complication of similar strange inconveniences, until he had been gone into and finished.

After a good repast, and much hospitality, Susan set out for the coach-office in another cabriolet, with Mr. Toots inside, as before, and the Chicken on the box, who, whatever distinction he conferred on the little party

by the moral weight and heroism of his character, was scarcely ornamental to it, physically speaking, on account of his plasters; which were numerous. But the Chicken had registered a vow, in secret, that he would never leave Mr. Toots (who was secretly pining to get rid of him), for any less consideration than the good-will and fixtures of a public-house; and being ambitious to go into that line and drink himself to death as soon as possible, he felt it his cue to make his company unacceptable.

The night-coach by which Susan was to go, was on the point of departure. Mr. Toots having put her inside, lingered by the window, irresolutely, until the driver was about to mount; when, standing on the step, and putting in a face that by the light of the lamp was anxious and confused, he said abruptly:

"I say, Susan! Miss Dombey, you know" —

"Yes, sir."

"Do you think she could — you know — eh?"

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Toots," said Susan, "but I don't hear you."

"Do you think she could be brought, you know — not exactly at once, but in time — in a long time — to — to love me, you know! There!" said poor Mr. Toots.

"Oh dear no!" returned Susan, shaking her head. "I should say never. Ne—ver!"

"Thank'ee!" said Mr. Toots. "It's of no consequence. Good-night. It's of no consequence, thank'ee!"

CHAPTER XLV.

THE TRUSTY AGENT.

Edith went out alone that day, and returned home early. It was but a few minutes after ten o'clock, when her carriage rolled along the street in which she lived.

There was the same enforced composure on her face, that there had been when she was dressing; and the wreath upon her head encircled the same cold and steady brow. But it would have been better to have seen its leaves and flowers reft into fragments by her passionate hand, or rendered shapeless by the fitful searches of a throbbing and bewildered brain for any resting-place, than adorning such tranquillity. So obdurate, so unapproachable, so unrelenting, one would have thought that nothing could soften such a woman's nature, and that everything in life had hardened it.

Arrived at her own door, she was alighting, when some one coming quietly from the hall, and standing bareheaded, offered her his arm. The servant being thrust aside, she had no choice but to touch it; and she then knew whose arm it was.

"How is your patient, sir?" she said, with a curled lip.

"He is better," returned Carker. "He is doing very well. I have left him for the night."

She bent her head, and was passing up the staircase, when he followed and said, speaking at the bottom:

"Madam! May I beg the favor of a minute's audience?"

She stopped and turned her eyes back. "It is an unseasonable time, sir, and I am fatigued. Is your business urgent?"

"It is very urgent," returned Carker. "As I am so fortunate as to have met you, let me press my petition."

She looked down for a moment at his glistening mouth; and he looked up at her, standing above him in her stately dress, and thought, again, how beautiful she was.

"Where is Miss Dombey?" she asked the servant, aloud.

"In the morning room, ma'am."

"Show the way there!" Turning her eyes again on the attentive gentleman at the bottom of the stairs, and informing him with a slight motion of her head, that he was at liberty to follow, she passed on.

"I beg your pardon! madam! Mrs. Dombey!" cried the soft and nimble Carker, at her side in a moment. "May I be permitted to entreat that Miss Dombey is not present?"

She confronted him, with a quick look, but with the same self-possession and steadiness.

"I would spare Miss Dombey," said Carker, in a low voice, "the knowledge of what I have to say. At least, madam, I would leave it to you to decide whether she shall know of it or not. I owe that to you. It is my bounden duty to you. After our former interview, it would be monstrous in me if I did otherwise."

She slowly withdrew her eyes from his face, and turn-

ing to the servant, said, "some other room." He led the way to a drawing-room, which he speedily lighted up and then left them. While he remained, not a word was spoken. Edith enthroned herself upon a couch by the fire; and Mr. Carker, with his hat in his hand and his eyes bent upon the carpet, stood before her, at some little distance.

"Before I hear you, sir," said Edith, when the door was closed, "I wish you to hear me."

"To be addressed by Mrs. Dombey," he returned, "even in accents of unmerited reproach, is an honor I so greatly esteem, that although I were not her servant in all things, I should defer to such a wish, most readily."

"If you are charged by the man whom you have just now left, sir;" Mr. Carker raised his eyes, as if he were going to counterfeit surprise, but she met them, and stopped him, if such were his intention; "with any message to me, do not attempt to deliver it, for I will not receive it. I need scarcely ask you if you are come on such an errand. I have expected you some time."

"It is my misfortune," he replied, "to be here, wholly against my will, for such a purpose. Allow me to say that I am here for two purposes. That is one."

"That one, sir," she returned, "is ended. Or, if you return to it" —

"Can Mrs. Dombey believe," said Carker, coming nearer, "that I would return to it in the face of her prohibition? Is it possible that Mrs. Dombey, having no regard to my unfortunate position, is so determined to consider me inseparable from my instructor as to do me great and wilful injustice?"

"Sir," returned Edith, bending her dark gaze full

upon him, and speaking with a rising passion that inflated her proud nostril and her swelling neck, and stirred the delicate white down upon a robe she wore, thrown loosely over shoulders that could bear its snowy neighborhood. "Why do you present yourself to me, as you have done, and speak to me of love and duty to my husband, and pretend to think that I am happily married, and that I honor him? How dare you venture so to affront me, when you know — *I* do not know better, sir: I have seen it in your every glance, and heard it in your every word — that in place of affection between us there is aversion and contempt, and that I despise him hardly less than I despise myself for being his! Injustice! If I had done justice to the torment you have made me feel, and to my sense of the insult you have put upon me, I should have slain you!"

She had asked him why he did this. Had she not been blinded by her pride and wrath, and self-humiliation, — which she was, fiercely as she bent her gaze upon him, — she would have seen the answer in his face. To bring her to this declaration.

She saw it not, and cared not whether it was there or no. She saw only the indignities and struggles she had undergone, and had to undergo, and was writhing under then. As she sat looking fixedly at them, rather than at him, she plucked the feathers from a pinion of some rare and beautiful bird, which hung from her wrist by a golden thread, to serve her as a fan, and rained them on the ground.

He did not shrink beneath her gaze, but stood, until such outward signs of her anger as had escaped her control subsided, with the air of a man who had his sufficient reply in reserve and would presently deliver it.

And he then spoke, looking straight into her kindling eyes.

"Madam," he said, "I know, and knew before to-day, that I have found no favor with you; and I knew why. Yes. I knew why. You have spoken so openly to me; I am so relieved by the possession of your confidence" —

"Confidence!" she repeated, with disdain.

He passed it over.

— "that I will make no pretence of concealment. I *did* see from the first, that there was no affection on your part, for Mr. Dombey — how could it possibly exist between such different subjects! And I *have* seen, since, that stronger feelings than indifference have been engendered in your breast — how could that possibly be otherwise, either, circumstanced as you have been. But was it for me to presume to avow this knowledge to you in so many words?"

"Was it for you, sir," she replied, "to feign that other belief, and audaciously to thrust it on me day by day?"

"Madam, it was," he eagerly retorted. "If I had done less, if I had done anything but that, I should not be speaking to you thus; and I foresaw — who could better foresee, for who has had greater experience of Mr. Dombey than myself? — that unless your character should prove to be as yielding and obedient as that of his first submissive lady, which I did not believe" —

A haughty smile gave him reason to observe that he might repeat this.

"I say, which I did not believe, — the time was likely to come, when such an understanding as we have now arrived at, would be serviceable."

"Serviceable to whom, sir?" she demanded scornfully.

"To you. I will not add to myself, as warning me to refrain even from that limited commendation of Mr. Dombey, in which I can honestly indulge, in order that I may not have the misfortune of saying anything distasteful to one whose aversion and contempt," with great expression, "are so keen."

"It is honest in you, sir," said Edith, "to confess to your 'limited commendation,' and to speak in that tone of disparagement, even of him: being his chief counsellor and flatterer!"

"Counsellor, — yes," said Carker. "Flatterer — no. A little reservation I fear I must confess to. But our interest and convenience commonly oblige many of us to make professions that we cannot feel. We have partnerships of interest and convenience, friendships of interest and convenience, dealings of interest and convenience, marriages of interest and convenience, every day."

She bit her blood-red lip; but without wavering in the dark, stern watch she kept upon him.

"Madam," said Mr. Carker, sitting down in a chair that was near her, with an air of the most profound and most considerate respect, "why should I hesitate now, being altogether devoted to your service, to speak plainly! It was natural that a lady endowed as you are, should think it feasible to change her husband's character in some respects, and mould him to a better form."

"It was not natural to *me*, sir," she rejoined. "I had never any expectation or intention of that kind."

The proud undaunted face showed him it was resolute to wear no mask he offered, but was set upon a reckless disclosure of itself, indifferent to any aspect in which it might present itself to such as he.

"At least it was natural," he resumed, "that you

should deem it quite possible to live with Mr. Dombey as his wife, at once without submitting to him, and without coming into such violent collision with him. But, madam, you did not know Mr. Dombey (as you have since ascertained), when you thought that. You did not know how exacting and how proud he is, or how he is, if I may say so, the slave of his own greatness, and goes yoked to his own triumphal car like a beast of burden, with no idea on earth but that it is behind him and is to be drawn on, over everything and through everything."

His teeth gleamed through his malicious relish of this conceit, as he went on talking:

"Mr. Dombey is really capable of no more true consideration for you, madam, than for me. The comparison is an extreme one; I intend it to be so; but quite just. Mr. Dombey, in the plenitude of his power, asked me — I had it from his own lips yesterday morning — to be his go-between to you, because he knows I am not agreeable to you, and because he intends that I shall be a punishment for your contumacy; and besides that, because he really does consider, that I, his paid servant, am an ambassador whom it is derogatory to the dignity — not of the lady to whom I have the happiness of speaking; she has no existence in his mind — but of his wife, a part of himself, to receive. You may imagine how regardless of me, how obtuse to the possibility of my having any individual sentiment or opinion he is, when he tells me, openly, that I am so employed. You know how perfectly indifferent to your feelings he is, when he threatens you with such a messenger. As you, of course, have not forgotten that he did."

She watched him still attentively. But he watched her too; and he saw that this indication of a knowledge

on his part, of something that had passed between herself and her husband, rankled and smarted in her haughty breast, like a poisoned arrow.

"I do not recall all this to widen the breach between yourself and Mr. Dombey, madam — Heaven forbid! what would it profit me — but as an example of the hopelessness of impressing Mr. Dombey with a sense that anybody is to be considered when he is in question. We who are about him, have, in our various positions, done our part, I dare say, to confirm him in his way of thinking; but if we had not done so, others would — or they would not have been about him; and it has always been, from the beginning, the very staple of his life. Mr. Dombey has had to deal, in short, with none but submissive and dependent persons, who have bowed the knee, and bent the neck, before him. He has never known what it is to have angry pride and strong resentment opposed to him."

"But he will know it now!" she seemed to say; though her lips did not part, nor her eyes falter. He saw the soft down tremble once again, and he saw her lay the plumage of the beautiful bird against her bosom for a moment; and he unfolded one more ring of the coil into which he had gathered himself.

"Mr. Dombey, though a most honorable gentleman," he said, "is so prone to pervert even facts to his own view, when he is at all opposed, in consequence of the warp in his mind, that he — can I give a better instance than this! — he sincerely believes (you will excuse the folly of what I am about to say; it not being mine) that his severe expression of opinion to his present wife, on a certain special occasion she may remember, before the lamented death of Mrs. Skewton, produced a withering effect, and for the moment quite subdued her!"

Edith laughed. How harshly and unmusically need not be described. It is enough that he was glad to hear her.

"Madam," he resumed, "I have done with this. Your own opinions are so strong, and, I am persuaded, so unalterable," he repeated those words slowly and with great emphasis, "that I am almost afraid to incur your displeasure anew, when I say that in spite of these defects and my full knowledge of them, I have become habituated to Mr. Dombey, and esteem him. But, when I say so, it is not, believe me, for the mere sake of vaunting a feeling that is so utterly at variance with your own, and for which you can have no sympathy" — oh how distinct and plain and emphasized this was! "but to give you an assurance of the zeal with which, in this unhappy matter, I am yours, and the indignation with which I regard the part I am required to fill!"

She sat as if she were afraid to take her eyes from his face.

And now to unwind the last ring of the coil!

"It is growing late," said Carker, after a pause, "and you are, as you said, fatigued. But the second object of this interview, I must not forget. I must recommend you, I must entreat you in the most earnest manner, for sufficient reasons that I have, to be cautious in your demonstrations of regard for Miss Dombey!"

"Cautious! What do you mean?"

"To be careful how you exhibit too much affection for that young lady."

"Too much affection, sir!" said Edith, knitting her broad brow and rising. "Who judges my affection, or measures it out. You?"

"It is not I who do so." He was, or feigned to be, perplexed.

"Who then?"

"Can you not guess who then?"

"I do not choose to guess," she answered.

"Madam," he said, after a little hesitation; meantime they had been, and still were, regarding each other as before; "I am in a difficulty here. You have told me you will receive no message, and you have forbidden me to return to that subject; but the two subjects are so closely entwined, I find, that unless you will accept this vague caution from one who has now the honor to possess your confidence, though the way to it has been through your displeasure, I must violate the injunction you have laid upon me."

"You know that you are free to do so, sir," said Edith. "Do it."

So pale, so trembling, so impassioned! He had not miscalculated the effect, then!

"His instructions were," he said, in a low voice, "that I should inform you that your demeanor towards Miss Dombey is not agreeable to him. That it suggests comparisons to him which are not favorable to himself. That he desires it may be wholly changed; and that if you are in earnest, he is confident it will be; for your continued show of affection will not benefit its object."

"That is a threat," she said.

"That is a threat," he answered in his voiceless manner of assent: adding aloud, "but not directed against *you*."

Proud, erect, and dignified, as she stood confronting him; and looking through him as she did, with her full bright flashing eye; and smiling, as she was, with scorn and bitterness; she sunk as if the ground had dropped beneath her, and in an instant would have fallen on the

floor, but that he caught her in his arms. As instantaneously she threw him off, the moment that he touched her, and, drawing back, confronted him again, immovable, with her hand stretched out.

"Please to leave me. Say no more to-night."

"I feel the urgency of this," said Mr. Carker, "because it is impossible to say what unforeseen consequences might arise, or how soon, from your being unacquainted with his state of mind. I understand Miss Dombey is concerned, now, at the dismissal of her old servant, which is likely to have been a minor consequence in itself. You don't blame me for requesting that Miss Dombey might not be present. May I hope so?"

"I do not. Please to leave me, sir."

"I knew that your regard for the young lady, which is very sincere and strong, I am well persuaded, would render it a great unhappiness to you, ever to be a prey to the reflection that you had injured her position and ruined her future hopes," said Carker, hurriedly, but eagerly.

"No more to-night. Leave me, if you please."

"I shall be here constantly in my attendance upon him, and in the transaction of business matters. You will allow me to see you again, and to consult what should be done, and learn your wishes?"

She motioned him towards the door.

"I cannot even decide whether to tell him I have spoken to you yet; or to lead him to suppose that I have deferred doing so, for want of opportunity, or for any other reason. It will be necessary that you should enable me to consult with you very soon."

"At any time but now," she answered.

"You will understand, when I wish to see you, that Miss Dombey is not to be present; and that I seek an interview as one who has the happiness to possess your confidence, and who comes to render you every assistance in his power, and, perhaps, on many occasions, to ward off evil from her?"

Looking at him still with the same apparent dread of releasing him for a moment from the influence of her steady gaze, whatever that might be, she answered, "Yes!" and once more bade him go.

He bowed, as if in compliance; but turning back, when he had nearly reached the door, said:

"I am forgiven, and have explained my fault. May I — for Miss Dombey's sake, and for my own — take your hand before I go?"

She gave him the gloved hand she had maimed last night. He took it in one of his, and kissed it, and withdrew. And when he had closed the door, he waved the hand with which he had taken hers, and thrust it in his breast.

CHAPTER XLVI.

RECOGNIZANT AND REFLECTIVE.

Among sundry minor alterations in Mr. Carker's life and habits that began to take place at this time, none was more remarkable than the extraordinary diligence with which he applied himself to business, and the closeness with which he investigated every detail that the affairs of the House laid open to him. Always active and penetrating in such matters, his lynx-eyed vigilance now increased twenty-fold. Not only did his weary watch keep pace with every present point that every day presented to him in some new form, but in the midst of these engrossing occupations he found leisure — that is, he made it — to review the past transactions of the Firm, and his share in them, during a long series of years. Frequently when the clerks were all gone, the offices dark and empty, and all similar places of business shut up, Mr. Carker, with the whole anatomy of the iron room laid bare before him, would explore the mysteries of books and papers, with the patient progress of a man who was dissecting the minutest nerves and fibres of his subject. Perch, the messenger, who usually remained on these occasions, to entertain himself with the perusal of the Price Current by the light of one candle, or to doze over the fire in the outer office, at the imminent risk every moment of diving head-foremost into the coal-box,

could not withhold the tribute of his admiration from this zealous conduct, although it much contracted his domestic enjoyments ; and again, and again, expatiated to Mrs. Perch (now nursing twins) on the industry and acuteness of their managing gentleman in the City.

The same increased and sharp attention that Mr. Carker bestowed on the business of the House, he applied to his own personal affairs. Though not a partner in the concern — a distinction hitherto reserved solely to inheritors of the great name of Dombey — he was in the receipt of some per centage on its dealings ; and, participating in all its facilities for the employment of money to advantage, was considered, by the minnows among the tritons of the East, a rich man. It began to be said, among these shrewd observers, that Jem Carker, of Dombey's, was looking about him to see what he was worth ; and that he was calling in his money at a good time, like the long-headed fellow he was ; and bets were even offered on the Stock Exchange that Jem was going to marry a rich widow.

Yet these cares did not in the least interfere with Mr. Carker's watching of his chief, or with his cleanness, neatness, sleekness, or any cat-like quality he possessed. It was not so much that there was a change in him, in reference to any of his habits, as that the whole man was intensified. Everything that had been observable in him before, was observable now, but with a greater amount of concentration. He did each single thing, as if he did nothing else — a pretty certain indication in a man of that range of ability and purpose, that he is doing something which sharpens and keeps alive his keenest powers.

The only decided alteration in him, was, that as he

rode to and fro along the streets, he would fall into deep fits of musing, like that in which he had come away from Mr. Dombey's house, on the morning of that gentleman's disaster. At such times, he would keep clear of the obstacles in his way, mechanically; and would appear to see and hear nothing until arrival at his destination, or some sudden chance or effort roused him.

Walking his white-legged horse thus, to the counting-house of Dombey and Son one day, he was as unconscious of the observation of two pairs of women's eyes, as of the fascinated orbs of Rob the Grinder, who, in waiting a street's length from the appointed place, as a demonstration of punctuality, vainly touched and retouched his hat to attract attention, and trotted along on foot, by his master's side, prepared to hold his stirrup when he should alight.

"See where he goes!" cried one of these two women, an old creature, who stretched out her shrivelled arm to point him out to her companion, a young woman, who stood close beside her, withdrawn like herself into a gate-way.

Mrs. Brown's daughter looked out, at this bidding on the part of Mrs. Brown; and there were wrath and vengeance in her face.

"I never thought to look at him again," she said, in a low voice; "but it's well I should, perhaps. I see. I see!"

"Not changed!" said the old woman, with a look of eager malice.

"*He* changed!" returned the other. "What for? What has *he* suffered? There is change enough for twenty in me. Isn't that enough?"

"See where he goes!" muttered the old woman,

watching her daughter with her red eyes; "so easy and so trim, a' horseback, while we are in the mud" —

"And of it," said her daughter impatiently. "We are mud, underneath his horse's feet. What should we be?"

In the intentness with which she looked after him again, she made a hasty gesture with her hand when the old woman began to reply, as if her view could be obstructed by mere sound. Her mother watching her, and not him, remained silent; until her kindling glance subsided, and she drew a long breath, as if in the relief of his being gone.

"Deary!" said the old woman then. "Alice! Handsome gal! Ally!" She gently shook her sleeve to arouse her attention. "Will you let him go like that, when you can wring money from him. Why, it's a wickedness, my daughter."

"Haven't I told you, that I will not have money from him?" she returned. "And don't you yet believe me? Did I take his sister's money? Would I touch a penny, if I knew it, that had gone through his white hands — unless, it was, indeed, that I could poison it, and send it back to him? Peace, mother, and come away."

"And him so rich?" murmured the old woman. "And us so poor!"

"Poor in not being able to pay him any of the harm we owe him," returned her daughter. "Let him give me that sort of riches, and I'll take them from him and use them. Come away. It's no good looking at his horse. Come away, mother!"

But the old woman, for whom the spectacle of Rob the Grinder returning down the street, leading the riderless horse, appeared to have some extraneous interest that it did not possess in itself, surveyed that young man with

the utmost earnestness; and seeming to have whatever doubts she entertained, resolved as he drew nearer, glanced at her daughter with brightened eyes and with her finger on her lip, and emerging from the gate-way at the moment of his passing, touched him on the shoulder.

"Why, where's my sprightly Rob been, all this time!" she said, as he turned round.

The sprightly Rob, whose sprightliness was very much diminished by the salutation, looked exceedingly dismayed, and said, with the water rising in his eyes:

"Oh! why can't you leave a poor cove alone, Misses Brown, when he's getting an honest livelihood and conducting himself respectable? What do you come and deprive a cove of his character for, by talking to him in the streets, when he's taking his master's horse to a honest stable — a horse you'd go and sell for cats' and dogs' meat if you had *your* way! Why, I thought," said the Grinder, producing his concluding remark as if it were the climax of all his injuries, "that you was dead long ago!"

"This is the way," cried the old woman, appealing to her daughter, "that he talks to me, who knew him weeks and months together, my deary, and have stood his friend many and many a time among the pigeon-fancying tramps and bird-catchers."

"Let the birds be, will you, Misses Brown?" retorted Rob, in a tone of the acutest anguish. "I think a cove had better have to do with lions than them little creeturs, for they're always flying back in your face when you least expect it. Well, how d'ye do and what do you want!" These polite inquiries the Grinder uttered, as it were under protest, and with great exasperation and vindictiveness.

"Hark how he speaks to an old friend, my deary!" said Mrs. Brown, again appealing to her daughter. "But there's some of his old friends not so patient as me. If I was to tell some that he knows, and has sported and cheated with, where to find him" —

"Will you hold your tongue, Misses Brown?" interrupted the miserable Grinder, glancing quickly round, as though he expected to see his master's teeth shining at his elbow. "What do you take a pleasure in ruining a cove for? At your time of life too! when you ought to be thinking of a variety of things!"

"What a gallant horse!" said the old woman, patting the animal's neck.

"Let him alone, will you, Misses Brown?" cried Rob, pushing away her hand. "You're enough to drive a penitent cove mad!"

"Why, what hurt do I do him, child?" returned the old woman.

"Hurt?" said Rob. "He's got a master that would find it out if he was touched with a straw." And he blew upon the place where the old woman's hand had rested for a moment, and smoothed it gently with his finger, as if he seriously believed what he said.

The old woman looking back to mumble and mouth at her daughter, who followed, kept close to Rob's heels as he walked on with the bridle in his hand; and pursued the conversation.

"A good place, Rob, eh?" said she. "You're in luck, my child."

"Oh don't talk about luck, Misses Brown," returned the wretched Grinder, facing round and stopping. "If you'd never come, or if you'd go away, then indeed a cove might be considered tolerable lucky. Can't you go

along, Misses Brown, and not foller me!" blubbered Rob, with sudden defiance. "If the young woman's a friend of yours, why don't she take you away, instead of letting you make yourself so disgraceful!"

"What!" croaked the old woman, putting her face close to his, with a malevolent grin upon it that puckered up the loose skin down in her very throat. "Do you deny your old chum! Have you lurked to my house fifty times, and slept sound in a corner when you had no other bed but the paving-stones, and do you talk to *me* like this! Have I bought and sold with you, and helped you in my way of business, school-boy, sneak, and what not, and do you tell *me* to go along? Could I raise a crowd of old company about you to-morrow morning, that would follow you to ruin like copies of your own shadow, and do you turn on *me* with your bold looks! I'll go. Come Alice."

"Stop, Misses Brown!" cried the distracted Grinder. "What are you doing of? Don't put yourself in a passion! Don't let her go, if you please. I haven't meant any offence. I said 'how d'ye do,' at first, didn't I? But you wouldn't answer. How *do* you do? Besides," said Rob piteously, "look here! How can a cove stand talking in the street with his master's prad a-wanting to be took to be rubbed down, and his master up to every individgle thing that happens?"

The old woman made a show of being partially appeased, but shook her head, and mouthed and muttered still.

"Come along to the stables, and have a glass of something that's good for you, Misses Brown, can't you?" said Rob, "instead of going on, like that, which is no good to you, nor anybody else? Come along

with her, will you be so kind?" said Rob. "I'm sure I'm delighted to see her, if it wasn't for the horse!"

With this apology, Rob turned away, a rueful picture of despair, and walked his charge down a by-street. The old woman, mouthing at her daughter, followed close upon him. The daughter followed.

Turning into a silent little square or court-yard that had a great church-tower rising above it, and a packer's warehouse, and a bottle-maker's warehouse, for its places of business, Rob the Grinder delivered the white-legged horse to the hostler of a quaint stable at the corner; and inviting Mrs. Brown and her daughter to seat themselves upon a stone bench at the gate of that establishment, soon reappeared from a neighboring public-house with a pewter measure and a glass.

"Here's master — Mr. Carker, child!" said the old woman, slowly, as her sentiment before drinking. "Lord bless him!"

"Why, I didn't tell you who he was," observed Rob, with staring eyes.

"We know him by sight," said Mrs. Brown, whose working mouth and nodding head, stopped for the moment, in the fixedness of her attention. "We saw him pass this morning, afore he got off his horse; when you were ready to take it."

"Ay, ay?" returned Rob, appearing to wish that his readiness had carried him to any other place. — "What's the matter with her? Won't she drink?"

This inquiry had reference to Alice, who, folded in her cloak, sat a little apart profoundly inattentive to his offer of the replenished glass.

The old woman shook her head. "Don't mind her,"

she said; "she's a strange creetur, if you know'd her, Rob. But Mr. Carker" —

"Hush!" said Rob, glancing cautiously up at the packer's, and at the bottle-maker's, as if, from any one of the tiers of warehouses, Mr. Carker might be looking down. "Softly."

"Why, he a'n't here!" cried Mrs. Brown.

"I don't know that," muttered Rob, whose glance even wandered to the church-tower, as if he might be there, with a supernatural power of hearing.

"Good master?" inquired Mrs. Brown.

Rob nodded; and added, in a low voice, "precious sharp."

"Lives out of town, don't he, lovey?" said the old woman.

"When he's at home," returned Rob; "but we don't live at home just now."

"Where then?" asked the old woman.

"Lodgings; up near Mr. Dombey's," returned Rob.

The younger woman fixed her eyes so searchingly upon him, and so suddenly, that Rob was quite confounded, and offered the glass again, but with no more effect upon her than before.

"Mr. Dombey — you and I used to talk about him, sometimes, you know," said Rob to Mrs. Brown. "You used to get me to talk about him."

The old woman nodded.

"Well, Mr. Dombey, he's had a fall from his horse," said Rob, unwillingly; "and my master has to be up there, more than usual, either with him, or Mrs. Dombey, or some of 'em; and so we've come to town."

"Are they good friends, lovey?" asked the old woman.

"Who?" retorted Rob.

"He and she?"

"What, Mr. and Mrs. Dombey?" said Rob. "How should *I* know!"

"Not them — Master and Mrs. Dombey, chick," replied the old woman, coaxingly.

"I don't know," said Rob, looking round him again. "I suppose so. How curious you are, Misses Brown! Least said, soonest mended."

"Why there's no harm in it!" exclaimed the old woman, with a laugh and a clap of her hands. "Sprightly Rob has grown tame since he has been well off! There's no harm in it."

"No, there's no harm in it, I know," returned Rob, with the same distrustful glance at the packer's and the bottle-maker's, and the church; "but blabbing, if it's only about the number of buttons on my master's coat, won't do. I tell you it won't do with him. A cove had better drown himself. He says so. I shouldn't have so much as told you what his name was, if you hadn't known it. Talk about somebody else."

As Rob took another cautious survey of the yard, the old woman made a secret motion to her daughter. It was momentary, but the daughter, with a slight look of intelligence, withdrew her eyes from the boy's face, and sat folded in her cloak as before.

"Rob, lovey!" said the old woman, beckoning him to the other end of the bench. "You were always a pet and favorite of mine. Now, weren't you? Don't you know you were?"

"Yes, Misses Brown," replied the Grinder, with a very bad grace.

"And you could leave me!" said the old woman,

flinging her arms about his neck. "You could go away, and grow almost out of knowledge, and never come to tell your poor old friend how fortunate you were, proud lad! Oho, oho!"

"Oh here's a dreadful go for a cove that's got a master wide awake in the neighborhood!" exclaimed the wretched Grinder. "To be howled over like this here!"

"Won't you come and see me, Robby?" cried Mrs. Brown. "Oho, won't you ever come and see me?"

"Yes, I tell you! Yes, I will!" returned the Grinder.

"That's my own Rob! That's my lovey!" said Mrs. Brown, drying the tears upon her shrivelled face, and giving him a tender squeeze. "At the old place, Rob?"

"Yes," replied the Grinder.

"Soon, Robby, dear?" cried Mrs. Brown; "and often?"

"Yes. Yes. Yes," replied Rob. "I will indeed, upon my soul and body."

"And then," said Mrs. Brown, with her arms uplifted towards the sky, and her head thrown back and shaking, "if he's true to his word, I'll never come a-near him, though I know where he is, and never breathe a syllable about him! Never!"

This ejaculation seemed a drop of comfort to the miserable Grinder, who shook Mrs. Brown by the hand upon it, and implored her with tears in his eyes, to leave a cove, and not destroy his prospects. Mrs. Brown, with another fond embrace, assented; but in the act of following her daughter, turned back, with her finger stealthily raised, and asked in a hoarse whisper for some money.

"A shilling, dear!" she said, with her eager, avaricious face, "or sixpence! For old acquaintance' sake. I'm so poor. And my handsome gal" — looking over her shoulder — "she's my gal, Rob — half starves me."

But as the reluctant Grinder put it in her hand, her daughter, coming quietly back, caught the hand in hers, and twisted out the coin.

"What," she said, "mother! always money! money from the first, and to the last. Do you mind so little what I said but now? Here. Take it!"

The old woman uttered a moan as the money was restored, but without in any other way opposing its restoration, hobbled at her daughter's side out of the yard, and along the by-street upon which it opened. The astonished and dismayed Rob staring after them, saw that they stopped, and fell to earnest conversation very soon; and more than once observed a darkly threatening action of the younger woman's hand (obviously having reference to some one of whom they spoke), and a crooning feeble imitation of it on the part of Mrs. Brown, that made him earnestly hope he might not be the subject of their discourse.

With the present consolation that they were gone, and with the prospective comfort that Mrs. Brown could not live forever, and was not likely to live long to trouble him, the Grinder, not otherwise regretting his misdeeds than as they were attended with such disagreeable incidental consequences, composed his ruffled features to a more serene expression by thinking of the admirable manner in which he had disposed of Captain Cuttle (a reflection that seldom failed to put him in a flow of spirits), and went to the Dombey counting-house to receive his master's orders.

There his master, so subtle and vigilant of eye, that Rob quaked before him, more than half expecting to be taxed with Mrs. Brown, gave him the usual morning's box of papers for Mr. Dombey, and a note for Mrs. Dombey: merely nodding his head as an enjoinder to be careful, and to use despatch — a mysterious admonition, fraught in the Grinder's imagination with dismal warnings and threats; and more powerful with him than any words.

Alone again, in his own room, Mr. Carker applied himself to work, and worked all day. He saw many visitors; overlooked a number of documents; went in and out, to and from, sundry places of mercantile resort; and indulged in no more abstraction until the day's business was done. But, when the usual clearance of papers from his table was made at last, he fell into his thoughtful mood once more.

He was standing in his accustomed place and attitude, with his eyes intently fixed upon the ground, when his brother entered to bring back some letters that had been taken out in the course of the day. He put them quietly on the table, and was going immediately, when Mr. Carker the manager, whose eyes had rested on him on his entrance, as if they had all this time had him for the subject for their contemplation, instead of the office-floor, said:

"Well, John Carker, and what brings *you* here?"

His brother pointed to the letters, and was again withdrawing.

"I wonder," said the manager, "that you can come and go, without inquiring how our master is."

"We had word this morning, in the counting-house, that Mr. Dombey was doing well," replied his brother.

"You are such a meek fellow," said the manager with

a smile, — "but you have grown so, in the course of years — that if any harm came to him, you'd be miserable, I dare swear now."

"I should be truly sorry, James," returned the other.

"He would be sorry!" said the manager, pointing at him, as if there were some other person present to whom he was appealing. "He would be truly sorry! This brother of mine! This junior of the place, this slighted piece of lumber, pushed aside with his face to the wall, like a rotten picture, and left so, for Heaven knows how many years; *he*'s all gratitude and respect, and devotion too, he would have me believe!"

"I would have you believe nothing, James," returned the other. "Be as just to me as you would to any other man below you. You ask a question, and I answer it."

"And have you nothing, spaniel," said the manager, with unusual irascibility, "to complain of in him? No proud treatment to resent, no insolence, no foolery of state, no exaction of any sort! What the devil! are you man or mouse?"

"It would be strange if any two persons could be together for so many years, especially as superior and inferior, without each having something to complain of in the other — as he thought, at all events," replied John Carker. "But apart from my history here" —

"His history here!" exclaimed the manager. "Why, there it is. The very fact that makes him an extreme case, puts him out of the whole chapter! Well?"

"Apart from that, which, as you hint, gives me a reason to be thankful that I alone (happily for all the rest) possess, surely there is no one in the house who would not say and feel at least as much. You do not think that anybody here would be indifferent to a mischance

or misfortune happening to the head of the House, or anything than truly sorry for it?"

"You have good reason to be bound to him too!" said the manager, contemptuously. "Why, don't you believe that you are kept here, as a cheap example, and a famous instance of the clemency of Dombey and Son, redounding to the credit of the illustrious House?"

"No," replied his brother mildly, "I have long believed that I am kept here for more kind and disinterested reasons."

"But you were going," said the manager, with the snarl of a tiger-cat, "to recite some Christian precept, I observed."

"Nay, James," returned the other, "though the tie of brotherhood between us has been long broken and thrown away" —

"Who broke it, good sir?" said the manager.

"I, by my misconduct. I do not charge it upon you."

The manager replied, with that mute action of his bristling mouth, "Oh, you don't charge it upon me!" and bade him go on.

"I say, though there is not that tie between us, do not, I entreat, assail me with unnecessary taunts, or misinterpret what I say, or would say. I was only going to suggest to you that it would be a mistake to suppose that it is only you, who have been selected here, above all others, for advancement, confidence, and distinction (selected, in the beginning, I know, for your great ability and trustfulness), and who communicate more freely with Mr. Dombey than any one, and stand, it may be said, on equal terms with him, and have been favored and enriched by him — that it would be a mistake to suppose that it is only you who are tender of his welfare

and reputation. There is no one in the house, from yourself down to the lowest, I sincerely believe, who does not participate in that feeling."

"You lie," said the Manager, red with sudden anger. "You're a hypocrite, John Carker, and you lie!"

"James!" cried the other, flushing in his turn. "What do you mean by these insulting words? Why do you so basely use them to me, unprovoked?"

"I tell you," said the manager, "that your hypocrisy and meekness — that all the hypocrisy and meekness of this place — is not worth *that* to me," snapping his thumb and finger, "and that I see through it as if it were air! There is not a man employed here, standing between myself and the lowest in place (of whom you are very considerate, and with reason, for he is not far off), who wouldn't be glad at heart to see his master humbled: who does not hate him, secretly: who does not wish him evil rather than good: and who would not turn upon him, if he had the power and boldness. The nearer to his favor, the nearer to his insolence; the closer to him, the farther from him. That's the creed here!"

"I don't know," said his brother, whose roused feelings had soon yielded to surprise, "who may have abused your ear with such representations; or why you have chosen to try me, rather than another. But that you have been trying me, and tampering with me, I am now sure. You have a different manner and a different aspect from any that I ever saw in you. I will only say to you, once more, you are deceived."

"I know I am," said the manager. "I have told you so."

"Not by me," returned his brother. "By your in-

formant, if you have one. If not, by your own thoughts and suspicions."

"I have no suspicions," said the manager. "Mine are certainties. You pusillanimous, abject, cringing dogs! All making the same show, all canting the same story, all whining the same professions, all harboring the same transparent secret."

His brother withdrew, without saying more, and shut the door as he concluded. Mr. Carker the manager drew a chair close before the fire, and fell to beating the coals softly with the poker.

"The faint-hearted, fawning knaves," he muttered, with his two shining rows of teeth laid bare. "There's not one among them, who wouldn't feign to be so shocked and outraged! — Bah! There's not one among them, but if he had at once the power, and the wit and daring to use it, would scatter Dombey's pride and lay it low, as ruthlessly as I rake out these ashes."

As he broke them up, and strewed them in the grate, he looked on with a thoughtful smile, at what he was doing. "Without the same queen beckoner too!" he added presently; "and there is a pride there, not to be forgotten — witness our own acquaintance!" With that he fell into a deeper revery, and sat pondering over the blackening grate, until he rose up like a man who had been absorbed in a book, and looking round him took his hat and gloves, went to where his horse was waiting, mounted, and rode away through the lighted streets; for it was evening.

He rode near Mr. Dombey's house; and falling into a walk as he approached it, looked up at the windows. The window where he had once seen Florence sitting with her dog, attracted his attention first, though there

was no light in it; but he smiled as he carried his eyes up the tall front of the house, and seemed to leave that object superciliously behind.

"Time was," he said, "when it was well to watch even your rising little star, and know in what quarter there were clouds, to shadow you if needful. But a planet has arisen, and you are lost in its light."

He turned the white-legged horse, round the street corner, and sought one shining window from among those at the back of the house. Associated with it was a certain stately presence, a gloved hand, the remembrance how the feathers of a beautiful bird's wing had been showered down upon the floor, and how the light white down upon a robe had stirred and rustled, as in the rising of a distant storm. These were the things he carried with him as he turned away again, and rode through the darkening and deserted parks at a quick rate.

In fatal truth, these were associated with a woman, a proud woman, who hated him, but who by slow and sure degrees had been led on by his craft, and her pride and resentment, to endure his company, and little by little to receive him as one who had the privilege to talk to her of her own defiant disregard of her own husband, and her abandonment of high consideration for herself. They were associated with a woman who hated him deeply, and who knew him, and who mistrusted him because she knew him, and because he knew her; but who fed her fierce resentment by suffering him to draw nearer and yet nearer to her every day, in spite of the hate she cherished for him. In spite of it! For that very reason; since its depths, too far down for her threatening eye to pierce, though she could see into them dimly, lay the dark retaliation, whose faintest shadow seen once and

shuddered at, and never seen again, would have been sufficient stain upon her soul.

Did the phantom of such a woman flit about him on his ride; true to the reality, and obvious to him?

Yes. He saw her in his mind, exactly as she was. She bore him company with her pride, resentment, hatred, all as plain to him as her beauty; with nothing plainer to him than her hatred of him. He saw her sometimes haughty and repellant at his side, and sometimes down among his horse's feet, fallen and in the dust. But he always saw her as she was, without disguise, and watched her on the dangerous way that she was going.

And when his ride was over, and he was newly dressed, and came into the light of her bright room with his bent head, soft voice, and soothing smile, he saw her yet as plainly. He even suspected the mystery of the gloved hand, and held it all the longer in his own for that suspicion. Upon the dangerous way that she was going, he was still; and not a footprint did she mark upon it, but he set his own there, straight.

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AUG 2 4 1989

MAR 1 9 2012

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